

PLANTING IDEAS • BEAUTIFUL GARDENS • EXPERT ADVICE

GARDENS

ILLUSTRATED

Brilliant design by
Arne Maynard
Piet Oudolf

**CHRISTMAS
WRAPPED UP**

**Making natural
decorations**

**Choosing presents
for gardeners**

26 *hollies for
year-round
interest*

NEW SERIES
**Identifying trees
on winter walks**

**STRUCTURE
IN WINTER**



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editor's letter



This December issue of *Gardens Illustrated* is packed full of plants and plans to brighten winter days. Brightness in winter feels so important, whether in the gentle light of misty mornings, the soft, tilting glow of early evenings, or the bright excitement of making plans for the festivities ahead.

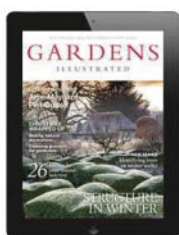
Lime Cross Nursery's practical guide to propagating conifers (page 60) is a new challenge for those who like a project, and on page 46 Bea Andrews, former head gardener at Sarah Raven's cut-flower garden at Perch Hill, shares her ideas for home-made Christmas decorations. With winter walks very much in mind, we begin a new series on identifying trees on page 50. Knowing the difference between an oak and an ash or a beech and a hornbeam – even out of season – feels like the sort of basic knowledge we should all have under our belts.

For garden inspiration, we visit a private garden in West Sussex, where designer Arne Maynard's stripped-back, copper beech and box topiary is a strong framework in cold weather, and we take a fresh look at the year-round appeal of holly on page 72.

Wishing you a very happy Christmas, I hope you enjoy the issue,

Lucy

LUCY BELLAMY, EDITOR



Save money when you **subscribe** to the **digital edition** – see page 32



Find inspiration from our selection of the best presents for gardeners, page 17.



Discover holly in its many variations, including this spineless *Ilex x altaclerensis* 'Golden King', page 72.

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS



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Plantsman and head gardener at Great Dixter in East Sussex.



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Garden designer, plantsman and columnist.

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Arne Maynard

Photograph by

Richard Bloom

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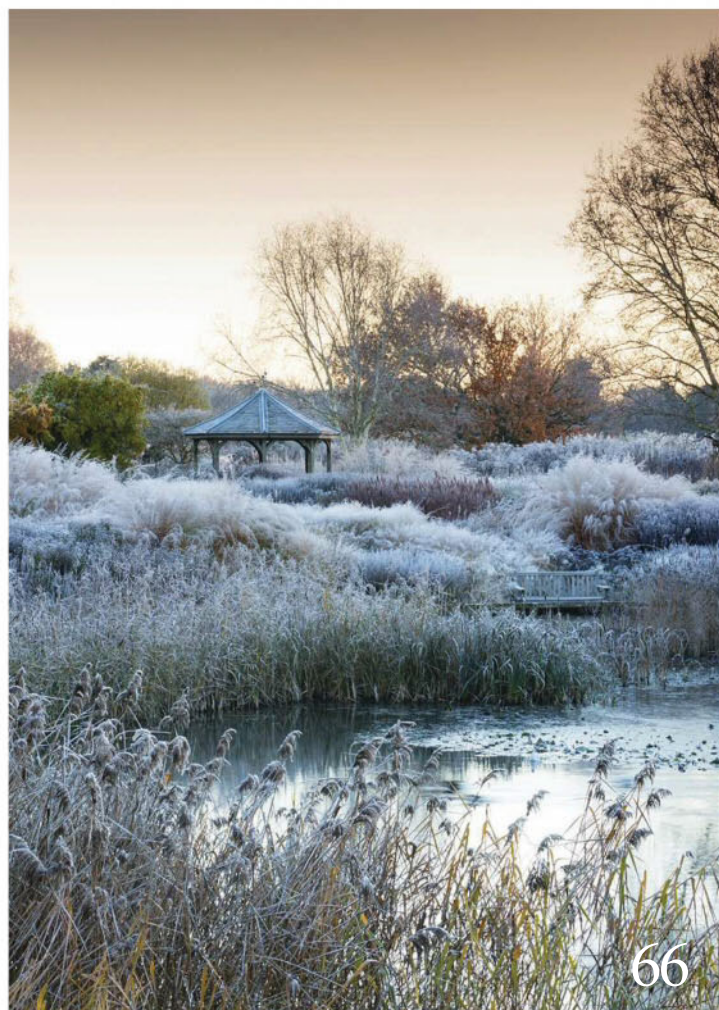
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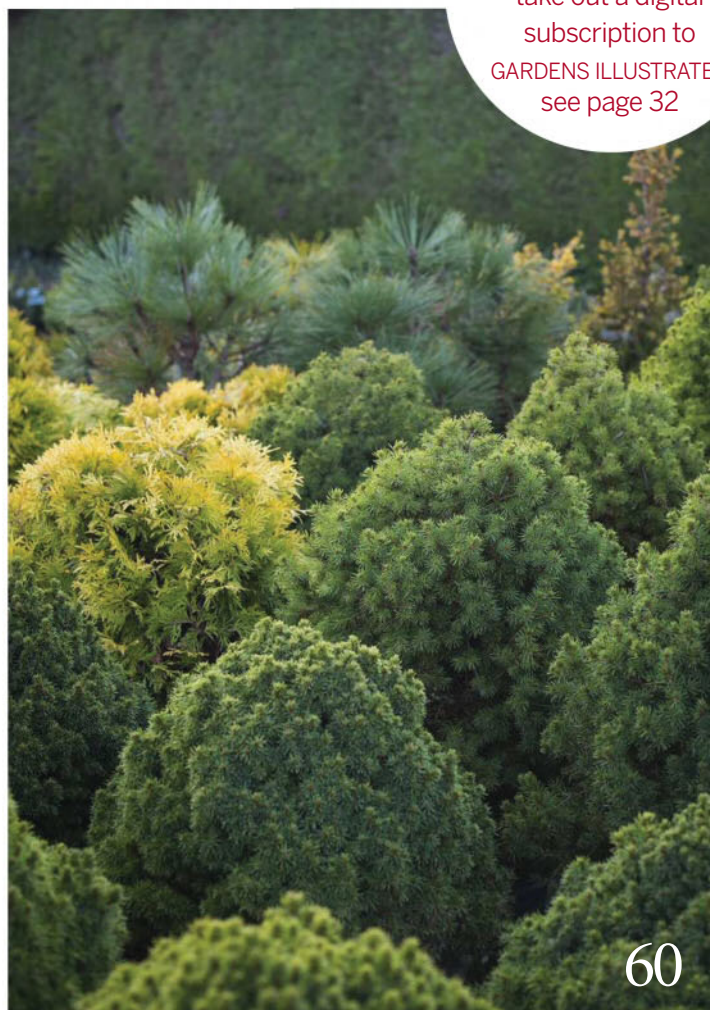
RICHARD BLOOM, JASON INGRAM

Subscribe & save

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- Book your tickets for the **Australian Landscape Conference**, in association with *Gardens Illustrated*, next March – page 106



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contributors



ANDREW MONTGOMERY

BEA ANDREWS

Bea is a self-taught florist and runs a floral design studio in Sussex. She trained in horticulture and has worked with some of the UK's best growers, and as head gardener at Sarah Raven's cut-flower garden at Perch Hill. She celebrates Christmas with a range of festive displays on page 46.

"I love working with seasonal foliage. Here I combine evergreens and succulents with flowers gathered throughout the year."



RICHARD BLOOM

Richard was born into a gardening family and began photographing gardens over 20 years ago. His award-winning photographs appear in many UK and foreign garden and lifestyle magazines. On pages 36 and 68 he takes his camera along to two contrasting gardens in West Sussex and Norfolk.

"The two gardens couldn't have been more different, but both are outstanding and magical in their winter guises."



KRISTIE YOUNG

LIA LEENDERTZ

Lia writes on food and gardening and this year was shortlisted as Cookery Writer of the Year by the Guild of Food Writers. She has a garden and allotment in Bristol, and her latest book is *The Almanac: A Seasonal Guide to 2018*. Find the first of her series on identifying trees on page 50.

"Counterintuitive it may be, but after leaf fall is the perfect moment of the year to learn the keys to identifying trees."



JASON INGRAM

JULIAN AND ISABEL BANNERMAN

Julian and Isabel have been making gardens for a very long time, delving into the soil as well as looking, reading, arguing and learning from others' and from their own mistakes. On page 97 they select the ten garden books they wouldn't be without.

"We had the best fun reading the collection – then we fell to arguing over which ones to include, and there ensued a fearful battle."

GARDENS

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2nd Floor, Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol BS1 3BN.

SYNDICATION & LICENSING

Gardens Illustrated is available for licensing and syndication.

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Standard subscription rates: UK £58.50 per annum; Eire and Europe £54.10 for 13 issues; rest of the world \$64.95 for 13 issues. Distribution Frontline, Peterborough. US distribution Source: FPD/Speedprint. Email inquiries@source.com. Printed in the UK by William Gibbons Ltd. *Gardens Illustrated* (ISSN 0968-8920) (USPS 015-608) is published 13 times a year (monthly with a Special issue in December) by Immediate Media Company Bristol, 2nd Floor, Tower House, Fairfax St, Bristol BS1 3BN, UK. Distributed in the US by Circulation Specialists, LLC, 2 Corporate Drive, Ste. 945, Shelton, CT 06484. Periodical postage paid at Shelton, CT and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Gardens Illustrated*, PO Box 37495, Boone, IA 50037-0495. Unsolicited manuscripts, artwork or transparencies are accepted on the understanding that the publishers incur no liability for their storage or return. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and may not be reproduced without permission. The *Gardens Illustrated* cover is printed on 250gsm Recycled Gloss produced in Belgium by Burgi; the china clay filler is supplied from the UK. The Immediate Media Company Limited is working to ensure that all of its paper is sourced from well-managed forests. This magazine can be recycled for use in newspapers and packaging. Please remove any gifts, samples or wrapping and dispose of it at your local collection point. All prices are correct at time of going to press. © Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited 2017. Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulation. ISSN 0968-8920.



Jan-Dec 2016
38,667*
*Combined print and digital sales

DEVELOP A PASSION FOR PLANTING DESIGN

At the **London College of Garden Design** our aim is to provide **world-class, inspirational garden designing training**. Our new **Planting Design Diploma**, launched in 2015, was created to enable professionals to develop their passion for plants by working with some of the very best designers and plants people.



Through practical workshops, inspirational lectures and visits the **Planting Design Diploma** explores contemporary and traditional techniques to support and develop your planting design skills. This is a unique course not found anywhere else in Europe, delivered over 30 days from January to June from our home in the **Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew**.

The course is led by **Andrew Fisher Tomlin, designer and Chartered Horticulturist**, and we are fortunate to have **some incredible specialist lecturers** including Rosy Hardy, Neil Lucas of Knoll Gardens, Tony Kirkham from the **Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew** and Nigel Dunnett from the **University of Sheffield**. Designer tutors include James Basson, Jo Thompson, Paul Hervey-Brookes, Ann-Marie Powell, Carolyn Willitts and Amanda Patton.

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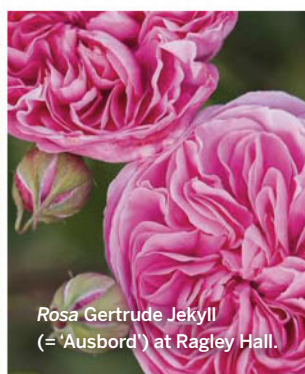
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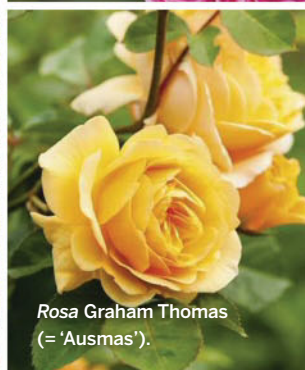
designersguild.com



The Long Garden at David Austin Roses.



Rosa Gertrude Jekyll
(= 'Ausbord') at Ragley Hall.



Rosa Graham Thomas
(= 'Ausmas').



Rosa gallica 'Versicolor' in
Coughton Court's rose garden.

BOOKING DETAILS

The price per person, based on two people sharing is £1,995 (a single supplement of £150 is levied by the hotel).

The price includes: three nights dinner, bed and breakfast at Brockencote Hall near Kidderminster; three delicious evening meals with wines at the hotel; plus four lunches, including a rose-themed lunch and an organic rosé wine tasting; all transportation from Shrewsbury Railway Station or from the hotel. The price does not include extras at the hotel, or travel insurance.

For more information or to book please contact:

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17-20 June 2018

The English Rose Tour

Join us on a tour of some of Shropshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire's finest gardens in celebration of the rose with Michael Marriott



TOUR LEADER

Michael Marriott has worked at David Austin Roses, designing and advising, for the past 30 years. He is an expert on all matters relating to roses, from the extensive range of cultivars and types to successful growing.

If you love the perfume of roses on an early summer's day and have always longed to discover more of this vast and varied genus, this four-day tour will let you indulge in all things rose related. You'll be welcomed into some wonderful gardens, not least of which is the outstanding **David Austin show garden** collection, plus a behind-the-scenes, private view of David Austin's own garden. Austin's expertise is world-renowned and

his emphasis on roses with fragrance and old garden character has won him many devotees.

Also featured on the tour are **Powis Castle, Coughton Court, Ragley Hall and Wollerton Old Hall**, all fantastic gardens with abundant rose displays.

The tour includes a visit to tour leader Michael Marriott's own new garden and an opportunity to meet author and gardener Katherine Swift at her garden at **Morville Hall**, where she will talk about her forthcoming book, *A Rose for Morville*.

Join us on this fascinating tour to visit beautiful gardens, discuss the merits of underplanting roses, mulching, pruning, budding, training, and above all celebrate the rose: doyen of the English garden.



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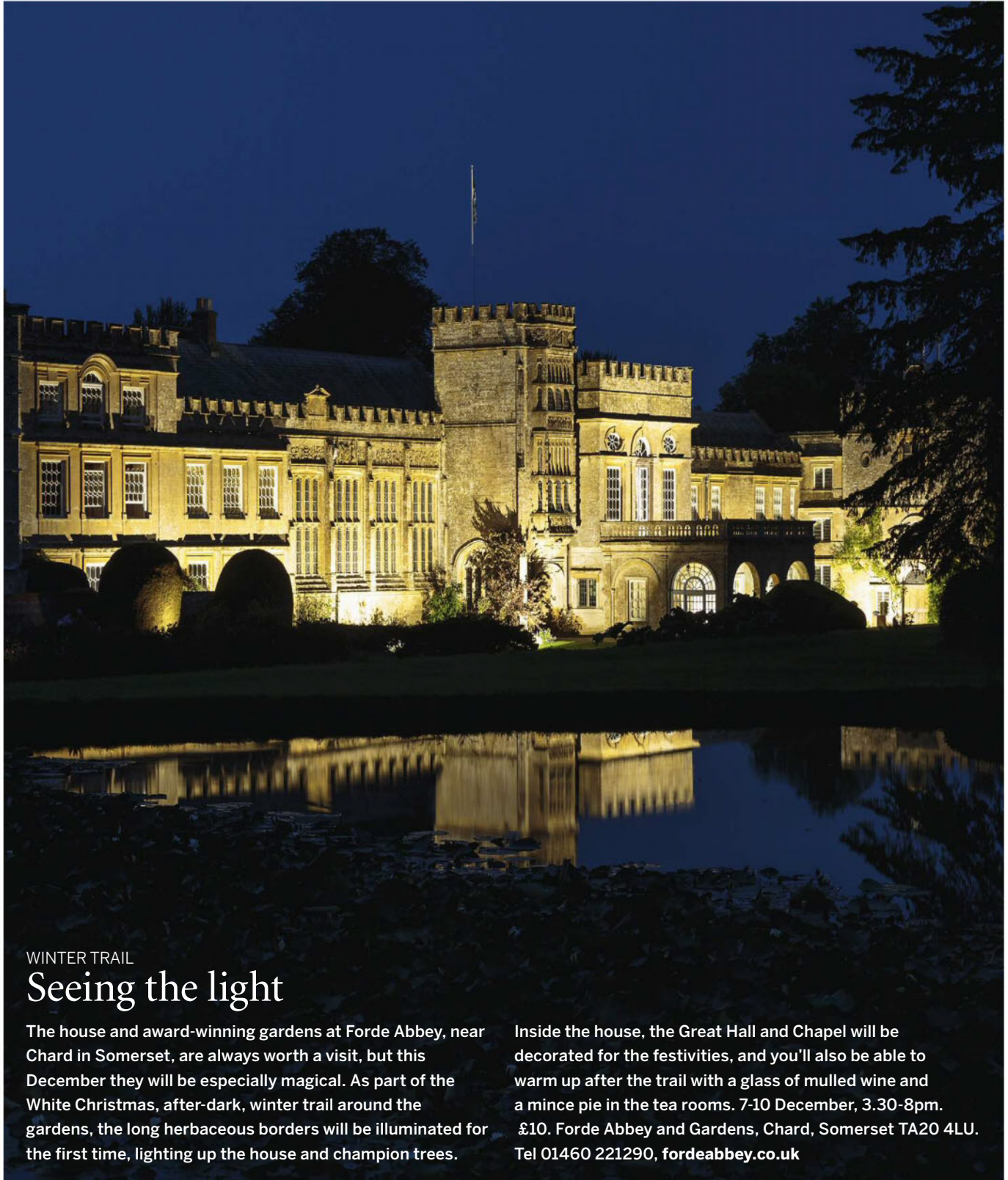
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Dig in

What's happening, where to go, what's in flower and what to buy this month

NEWS COMPILED BY ALYS HURN



WINTER TRAIL

Seeing the light

The house and award-winning gardens at Forde Abbey, near Chard in Somerset, are always worth a visit, but this December they will be especially magical. As part of the White Christmas, after-dark, winter trail around the gardens, the long herbaceous borders will be illuminated for the first time, lighting up the house and champion trees.

Inside the house, the Great Hall and Chapel will be decorated for the festivities, and you'll also be able to warm up after the trail with a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie in the tea rooms. 7-10 December, 3.30-8pm. £10. Forde Abbey and Gardens, Chard, Somerset TA20 4LU. Tel 01460 221290, fordeabbey.co.uk

HORTICULTURAL EXPERIENCE

Just the tonic

Take a horticultural tour of the Bombay Sapphire Distillery, at Laverstoke Mill in Hampshire, and not only will you learn about the distilling process, but you'll also get the chance to explore the spectacular, Thomas Heatherwick-designed, curved glasshouses with horticulturist Chris Cotterell. Chris will explain more about the ten exotic botanicals used

in the distillery's gin, which, as well as juniper, includes orris root and Chinese liquorice. There's also the chance to sample the finished product. Botanical bliss. The Horticultural Experience will run on two Wednesdays every month from March to October next year priced £40 – and could make an original Christmas gift. For details visit bombaysapphire.com



WORKSHOP

Dark art

What could be better as a pre-Christmas treat than a day dedicated to chocolate? The Art of Chocolate with Botanical Blends is a half-day masterclass at London's Garden Museum where you'll learn how to pair chocolate's aromas with a range of delicious botanical flavours. Taste expert Meredith Whitley will help you learn how to taste chocolate using all your senses, and create your own chocolates, including fruit and herb mendiants (pictured), a French Christmas treat, and dark rosewater ganache truffles using award-winning chocolate from the Pump Street Bakery. 3 December, 12.45-4pm. £55. gardenmuseum.org.uk

HAPPY WRAPPING

Ensure your gifts stand out under the tree with this gorgeous Lokta paper from Happywrap. The eco-friendly paper is handmade from the inner fibrous bark of the *Daphne papyracea*, which is known in Nepal as the lokta bush and regenerates after harvesting, making it completely sustainable. It comes in a range of naturally dyed designs and costs £3 for a 70 x 50cm sheet. happywrap.co.uk



SEEDS

Poppy love

Seed supplier Thompson & Morgan has named this eye-catching, hardy annual, *Papaver somniferum* var. *album* (sold as Poppy 'Album'), as its 2018 Flower of the Year. Growing to a height of 90cm, its cup-shaped blooms display delicate, pale-pink petals with a contrasting deep-lilac patch at the base. Flowers last from June to September then fade to be replaced with attractive seedheads that contain edible seed you can use for baking. £2.49 for a packet of 300 seeds. thompson-morgan.com

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“The water is amazing, it’s like swimming in silk. We had a couple of dragonflies buzzing past us... you definitely feel you’re one with nature.

There were lots of things we wanted to do to the house but this was the one thing that we felt everybody benefited from. Having the pond has made a big difference to the way we use the garden. We all love it.”

Nigel & Mandy Keene *Basingstoke*

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FUNDRAISER

Talk of the town

Book now for what promises to be a fascinating talk to raise funds for the charity Horatio's Garden. The Art of Gardens, a *Question Time*-style panel discussion at London's Royal Geographical Society on 31 January, will feature Cleve West, Joe Swift, James Alexander-Sinclair and Bunny Guinness (pictured above, from left), who have all designed gardens for the charity that creates and cares for gardens in NHS spinal injury centres, joined by Tom Stuart-Smith who will design the charity's proposed next garden at Stanmore. The discussion kicks off a series of talks for Works on Paper, an annual art fair specialising in drawings, watercolours, prints and photographs, which runs at the RGS from 1-4 February 2018, and the ticket price of £35 for this first session gives you access to the fair's invite-only preview. worksonpaperfair.com



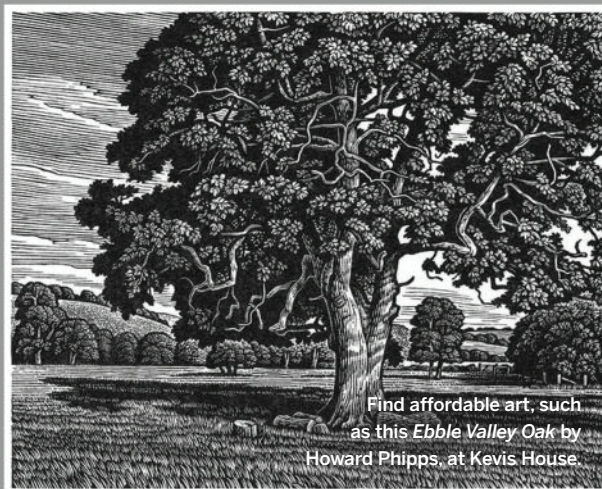
The first Horatio's Garden at Salisbury Hospital.

WILLOW WORKSHOP

Artist Lizzie Farey creates delicate sculptures from willow and other coppiced woods. To tie in with her exhibition *A Fine Line* at the City Arts Centre, Edinburgh, 18 November – 18 February 2018, Lizzie is hosting a one-day masterclass at the centre where you can learn how to make willow Christmas trees, wreaths and stars for the festive season. The course costs £75 per person, including materials. Booking essential. 16 December, 10am-4pm. Tel 0131 529 3993, edinburghmuseums.org.uk



Diary



Find affordable art, such as this *Ebble Valley Oak* by Howard Phipps, at Kevis House.

• The Society of Wood Engravers Exhibition

View more than 100 wood engravings, woodcuts and linocuts made by artists from the UK at the Kevis House Gallery in Petworth. 11 November – 23 December, 10am-5pm. Kevis House, Lombard Street, Petworth, West Sussex GU28 0AG. Tel 01798 215007, kevishouse.com

• Niwaki Open House

Take the opportunity to get some expert advice from the team at Niwaki and browse the Japanese tool supplier's full range, from garden snips and pruning shears to the company's iconic tripod ladders. 24-25 November. 8 Chaldicott Barns, Semley, Wiltshire SP7 9AW. Tel 01747 445059, niwaki.com

• Great Dixter Christmas Fair

Get your Christmas shopping off to the perfect start at the Great Dixter Christmas Fair with festive gifts from local traders, artisans and artists. 25-26 November, 10am-4pm. £5. Great Dixter House and Gardens, Northiam, Rye, East Sussex TN31 6PH. Tel 01797 252878, greatdixter.co.uk

• Beth Chatto's Christmas Fayre

Find more handmade gifts and follow a children's winter trail around the gardens. 26-27 November, 10am-4pm. Beth Chatto Gardens, Elmstead Market, Colchester, Essex CO7 7DB. Tel 01206 822007, bethchatto.co.uk

• Studying & Painting Living Jewels

Capture the colour and beauty of insects on this one-day watercolour painting workshop suitable for beginners. 2 December, 10am-4pm. £55. Linnaeus Room, University of Bristol Botanic Garden, The Holmes, Stoke Park Road, Bristol BS9 1JG. Tel 0117 428 2041, bristol.ac.uk

• Leaf-inspired Jewellery

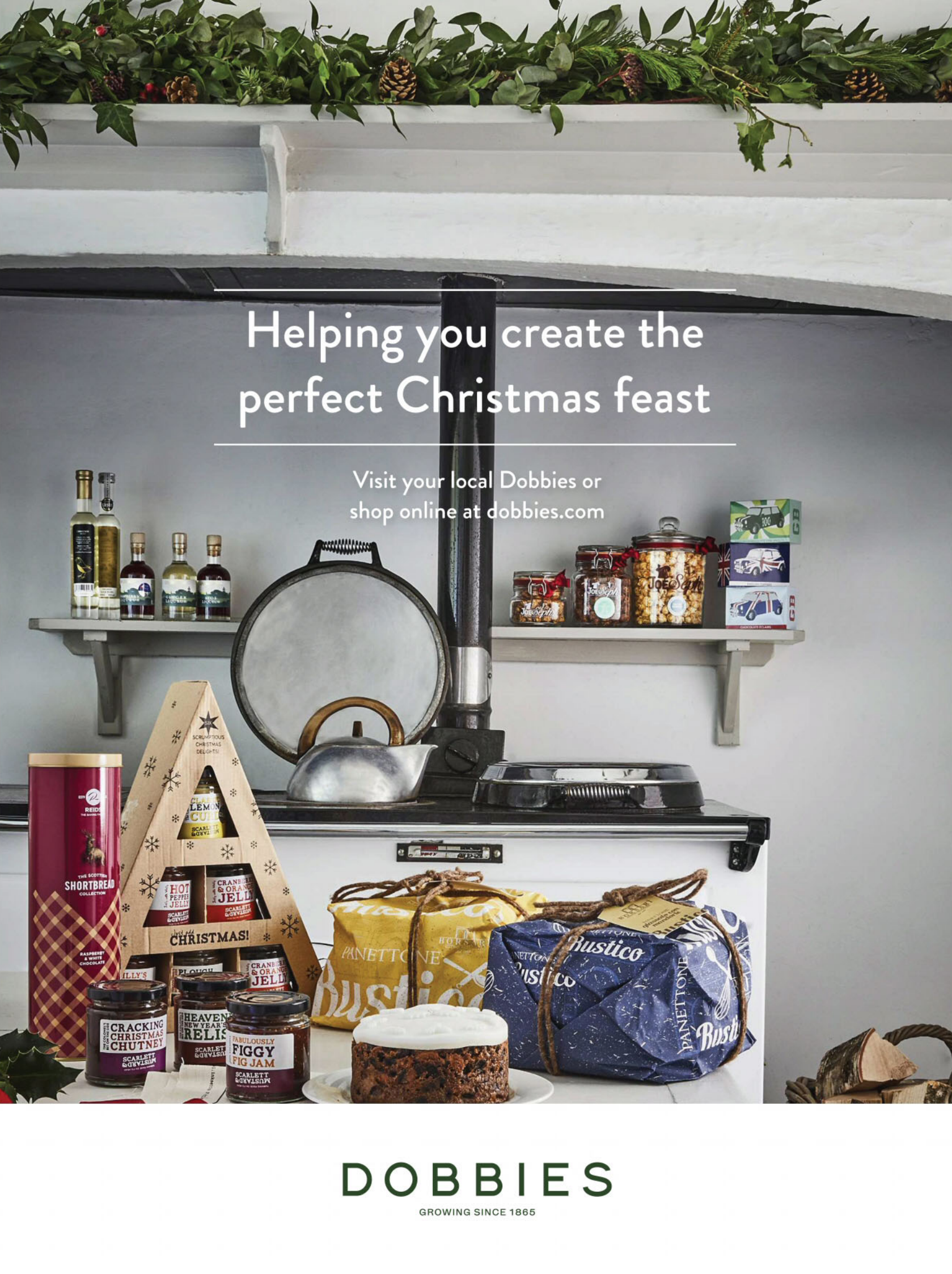
Learn how to make a leaf pendant based on plants growing at Chelsea Physic Garden on this one-day workshop with jewellery maker Liz Pearson. Includes all materials and a light lunch. 15 December, 9.30am-4pm. £105. Chelsea Physic Garden, 66 Royal Hospital Road, London SW3 4HS. Tel 020 7352 5646, chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk

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PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM STYLING NIKI GOSS

Handmade Star of Bethlehem decorations, medium (11cm) £23, large (15cm) £39, Manufactum.
For all stockist information, turn to page 105



Steam-bent Coat Loop Rail, from £195, and No.1 Christmas Bauble, box of three, £275, both Tom Raffield; Long Reversible Bomber Jacket, £245, Parka London; Hand Shears, £27, Jakoti; Hand Woven Jute Macrame Market Bag, olive, £29, and Waterproof Wool Picnic Blanket, £99, both The Future Kept; Toboggan, £59, Hen & Hammock. All other items stylist's own.



Left Lifestyle 8oz Hunter's Flask with four cups in pale blue/silver or navy leather, £125, Ettinger. **Middle** Fine Lambswool Mittens in grey, £34, The Future Kept. **Right** Bird House Silver Thermometer, window-mounted, £9.80, Northlight.



Left Japanese Secateurs, £38, Manufactum. **Middle** Moba Star Candlestick, £16.95, Nkuku; Extra Tall Tapered Beeswax Candles, £16 a pair, The London Honey Company; Longton Jug (medium), £14, and Pot (medium), £55, both Neptune. **Right** Well Watering Can, £159, Really Well Made; Opinel Le Secateur, £49.95, Fforest.



Left Dill Print, from £20, Clarissa Hulse. **Middle** Folklore Enamel Tumblers, set of four, £29.97, Fred Aldous; Ghillie Kettle (1.5L), £54, Objects of Use. **Right** Palissade Lounge Chair, £295, and Ottoman, £199, both Hay; Dill Linen Cushion, £45, Clarissa Hulse; Knitted Alpaca Throw, mustard, £85, Burford; Welsh Wool Blanket, charcoal, £245, Fforest.



Left English Oak & Hazelnut Cologne, £88 for 100ml, Jo Malone. **Middle** Red Cross Back Apron, £44, Liz Evans; Felco Secateurs, from £36.99, Crocus. **Right** Washi Tape, from £2.50, Fox and Star; Tape Dispenser, £29, Another Country; Rite in the Rain Pocket Notebook in green, £4.99, Go Outdoors.



Left Living Pattern Postcard Packet, £11.99, Eastern Biological; Bibi Vases, set of 6, £19.95, All Things Brighton Beautiful. **Middle** Harvesting basket, £30, Hen & Hammock. **Right** Tiny Kiko Decorations, set of 3, brass, copper or zinc, £19.95, Nkuku.



Left Tool Pouch, £24, Niwaki; De Wit Victorian Trowel, £21.99, Crocus. **Middle** Double Pencil Sharpener, £8, Labour and Wait. **Right** Tree Calendar Print (26 x 26cm), £60, The Boy Frost.



Handmade Brass Acorns (from a set of Woodland Table Scatters), £12, and large Bronze Wreath Hoop, £22 for a set of two sizes (small 20cm and large 30cm diameter), both Rowen & Wren; Tsuki, the moon, Japanese Brass Trivet, £70, Objects of Use. All other items stylist's own.



Left Aigloo Boot Socks, marron, £20, and Landfor Rubber Boots, brown, £49, Aigle. **Middle** Urban Insect Hotel, Bird Feeder, and Nest Box, £21.99 each, Simon King Wildlife. **Right** Leather Rope Swing, from £269, Sitting Spiritually.



Left Black Teapot, from £48, Peter Bodenham. **Middle** Autumn Beech Leaf Block Print on Japanese washi paper, €240, and large, plywood Hanging Frame, €40, both Superfolk. **Right** Barrow BBQ Fire Pit by Konstantin Slawinski, £799, Conran Shop.



Left Everdure Cube Portable Barbeque by Heston Blumenthal, orange, £149, John Lewis. **Middle** Rubber Squeeze Flower Sprinkler, £10.50, Manufactum; Tarred String, £4.75 each, Wells & Winter. **Right** Lifestyle Square Tape Measure (tan leather), £75, Ettinger.

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Hamamelis x intermedia 'Jelena'

This is a lovely witch hazel for the winter garden. In December, ravelled trusses of dainty, ribbon-petaled flowers of yellow suffused with burnt orange are produced from stark, leafless twigs. The flowers, although small, are tolerant of winter weather and will continue well into January. The scent is good, and it is worth picking a sprig to bring indoors, although the flowers will not last long in the heat. 'Jelena' has exceptional autumn colour with leaves turning fiery red and orange. Plant in neutral to acidic soil that doesn't get too dry in summer, and prune after flowering only when necessary. AGM*.

Height 4m.

Origin Garden origin.

Conditions Any soil, neutral to acidic, not water logged.

Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

Season Autumn and winter.





December plants

Mat finds delight in winter bulbs and foliage and heads into the greenhouse to nurture two tender orchids

WORDS MATTHEW REESE PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM

Mat Reese

is head gardener at Malverleys, a private garden in Hampshire.



Narcissus papyraceus

Paperwhite narcissi are among the easiest bulbs to force for indoor Christmas displays. The key is to ensure that they have at least a few weeks in a cold frame to establish a good root system before trying to force them. The tazetta-blooms are glistening white, held in loose clusters and produce a very powerful scent. The scent can become cloying, and they are best used in a large room or porch. Stake with a split cane and tie in the stems and leaves with raffia – one at a lower tier to take in the foliage, and then again just below the flowers.

Height 40cm.

Origin Mediterranean.

Conditions Any soil.

Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 4a-8b.

Season Late winter into early spring.

Picea orientalis

The oriental spruce is a broadly conical tree with very smart, densely needled twigs that look like fat pipe cleaners. The branches have an ascending habit with weeping laterals that look particularly festive when covered in slim, hanging cones. Both the cones and branches are particularly good for making Christmas decorations.

It is best grown as a specimen tree where the lovely architecture can be enjoyed unobscured by competition, provided it is not too exposed. Plant in any soil that is not too thin, chalky, or susceptible to long periods of drought. AGM.

Height 12m.

Origin Northern Turkey.

Conditions Any soil.

Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-7b.

Season Year round.



Camellia x vernalis 'Yuletide'

A chance hybrid between *C. japonica* and *C. sasanqua* that arose in a Californian nursery. It is a very welcome presence in the depths of winter, making a bushy, evergreen shrub covered in polished foliage and has brilliant-red flowers, each with a golden central boss. Plant in a sheltered position that receives some sun during the summer months in order to promote flowering. It does well in a pot, providing it is fed with a good camellia fertiliser. It can suffer in the coldest gardens, but will make a good plant for city gardens providing the soil is lime-free.

Height 2.5m.

Origin Garden origin.

Conditions Any good acidic soil; some sun.

Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 7a-10b.

Season Winter.



Helleborus niger hybrid

This selection from Harvington Hellebores has bloomed before Christmas for the past few years and produces little vignettes of sumptuous, white flowers, each blossom centred with a cluster of golden stamens. Although they have a reputation for requiring a limy soil, mine have been thriving in stony, humus-rich, acidic soil for some years. They do take time to establish, resent disturbance, and hate sitting wet. They're also gross feeders, meaning they are hungry plants and so need to be fed annually with compost.

Height 25cm.

Origin Garden origin.

Conditions Any soil that does not sit wet; shade.

Hardiness RHS H7.

Season Winter into spring.

Hippeastrum 'Grand Diva'

For flower power, there are few plants that come close to indoor amaryllis. 'Grand Diva' is a wonderful selection that produces huge, vivid-red, funnel-shaped flowers, with four to five blooms per stem. Plant the bulbs in a heavy clay pot and firm enough soil around the bulb to ensure it does not become dislodged under the weighty inflorescence. Heat is important to initiate growth. Keep the compost moist, but not too wet, until the roots have formed and the flower stem emerges. Water and feed as the foliage is produced and stop in August to let the bulb ripen.

Height 50cm.

Origin Garden origin.

Conditions Any soil.

Hardiness RHS H1B.

Season Late winter into early spring.



Mahonia x media 'Winter Sun'

An extraordinary foliage plant that has a presence in the garden through the year. The distinctive, glossy roundels of prickly, pinnate leaves sit atop thick, corky stems, and make a nice addition to the garden tapestry. In December, 'Winter Sun' produces dense clusters of ascending flower spikes, each composed of small, bright-yellow blooms. The flowers are sweetly scented and last into January. Mahonias can become a little ungainly and need to be pruned to prevent them from getting too willowy. Prune in the spring by removing a third of the old wood. AGM.

Height 3m.

Origin Garden origin.

Conditions Any soil.

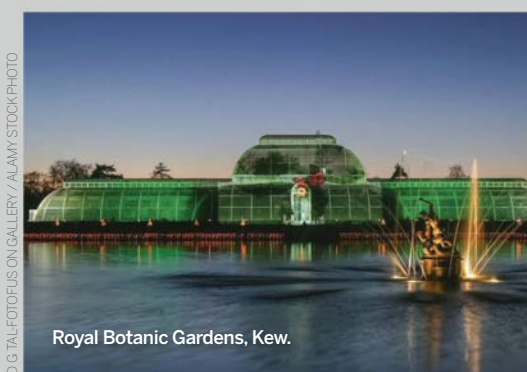
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 6b-9b.

Season Winter.

Places to visit

Recommended places to see and buy greenhouse plants – and to escape winter altogether

Burnham Nurseries is one of the nicest places to shop for orchids. It's tucked away in south Devon and boasts the largest collection of orchids and hybrids available in the UK. The greenhouses are decorated from head to toe with plants from the smallest to the tallest and everything in between. It offers mail order and exhibits at shows all over the country. Burnham



Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Nurseries, Forches Cross, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 6PZ. Tel 01626 352233, orchids.uk.com

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, celebrates Christmas with a display of lights and illuminations. More than a million lights are threaded through, up, and over magnificent trees and buildings. It is a wonderful way to see the gardens, and the Palm

Cymbidium hybrid

The *Cymbidium* hybrids are some of the least demanding orchids. The large flowers, held on arching spikes, normally have a decorative lip and last over two months. In spring, place outside in a sheltered position in light shade. Water in the morning with a general purpose, 20-20-20 feed. Flowers form from early October and will continue through the winter months. Before the cold sets in, put the plants back into the greenhouse or windowsill with daytime temperatures close to 20°C and 10°C at night. Protect from molluscs if necessary.

Height 1m.

Origin Garden origin.

Conditions Specialist orchid compost; overwinter inside; dappled shade outside.

Hardiness RHS H1A.

Season Winter into early spring.



Cattleia hybrid

Cattleia hybrids are some of the most beautiful and easiest of the orchids to grow. They produce large, blowsy, colourful flowers with a frilly lip and exude an exquisite citrus-floral scent. The key to most orchid cultivation for the at-home grower is to try to match your orchid with your home, or find a niche to suit the orchid. *Cattleias* like high humidity, warmth and around 50 per cent sunlight. Humidity can be provided via a bark-filled dish beneath the plant, but the other factors need to be considered carefully. Feed lightly from March to October with an orchid feed.

Height 30cm.

Origin Garden origin.

Conditions Warm glasshouse cultivation.

Hardiness RHS H1A.

Season Winter into spring.

Miscanthus sinensis 'Morning Light'

A subtly variegated grass that makes an upright fountain of foliage during the summer. I grow it as a single specimen and contrast it against perennials and shrubs. As summer colours dissolve in winter, the beauty of decay comes to the fore and browns become more important in the garden. This grass keeps its structure as the foliage dries and tightens into a column of straw-coloured leaves that persist into spring. Cut it hard down the ground in spring, and split every three years to maintain vigour. AGM.

Height 1.5m.

Origin Garden origin.

Conditions Any soil.

Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

Season Early summer to late winter.



House looks particularly stunning. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 3AE. Tel 020 8332 5655, kew.org

If you're planning a winter trip to the USA don't miss one of the country's finest gardens, **Longwood Gardens**, in Pennsylvania. It puts on huge floral displays and illuminations in both the Main and East Conservatories, and

throughout the gardens, which celebrate Christmas in December with quite some aplomb. Longwood Gardens, 1001 Longwood Road, Kennett Square, PA 19348, USA. Tel +1 610 388 1000, longwoodgardens.org

Even further afield, the **Blue Mountains Botanic Garden**, in Mount Tomah in New South Wales, Australia, houses a really interesting collection of plants that is



GENEVEE VALLEE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

beautifully laid out in the most wonderful mountain setting. It is a sister garden to the Royal Botanic Garden, Sydney, but on a smaller, more intimate scale. From its very good restaurant you can also enjoy views across the mountaintops. Bells Line of Road, Mount Tomah, NSW 2758, Australia. Tel +61 (0)2 4567 3000, bluemountainbotanicgarden.com.au



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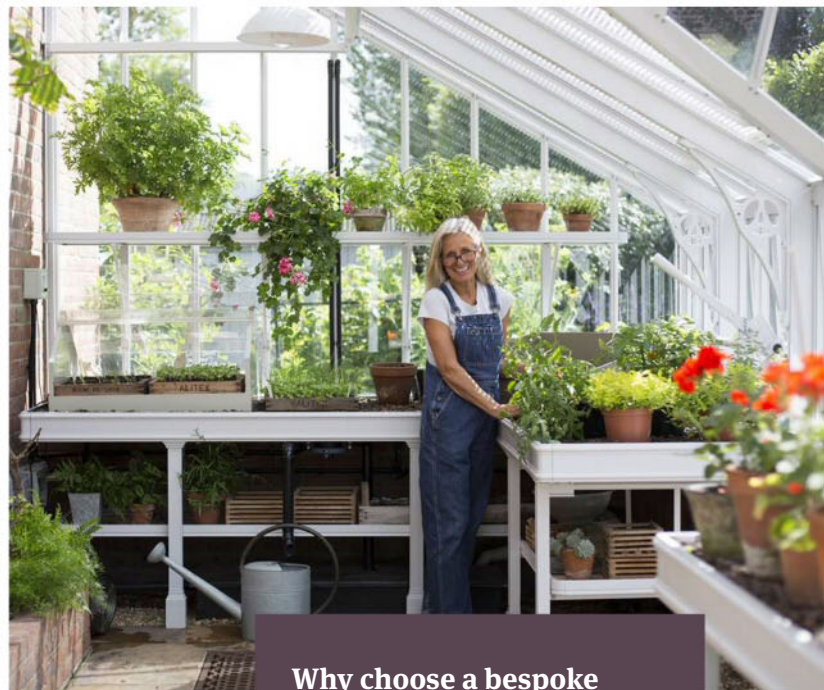
And accordingly, this high standard in look, build and purpose is reflected in Alitex's long-standing partnerships with the National Trust and Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

If you have an existing brick wall, it may be a great place to pitch a lean-to greenhouse, without losing any garden space, and depending on the space available, you can adapt the roof pitch to achieve an elegant look.

If you do have more space available, a freestanding structure can make a real statement and help you identify different ways to use certain areas of your garden, depending on where you place the door. There are many options available to you for your internal layout, too.

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Your specific growing requirements can also determine the shape and design of your greenhouse. For specialist fruit growing, for example, a Peach House would be ideal, as its steep roof pitch creates excellent air circulation and maximises direct sunlight to the rear wall.



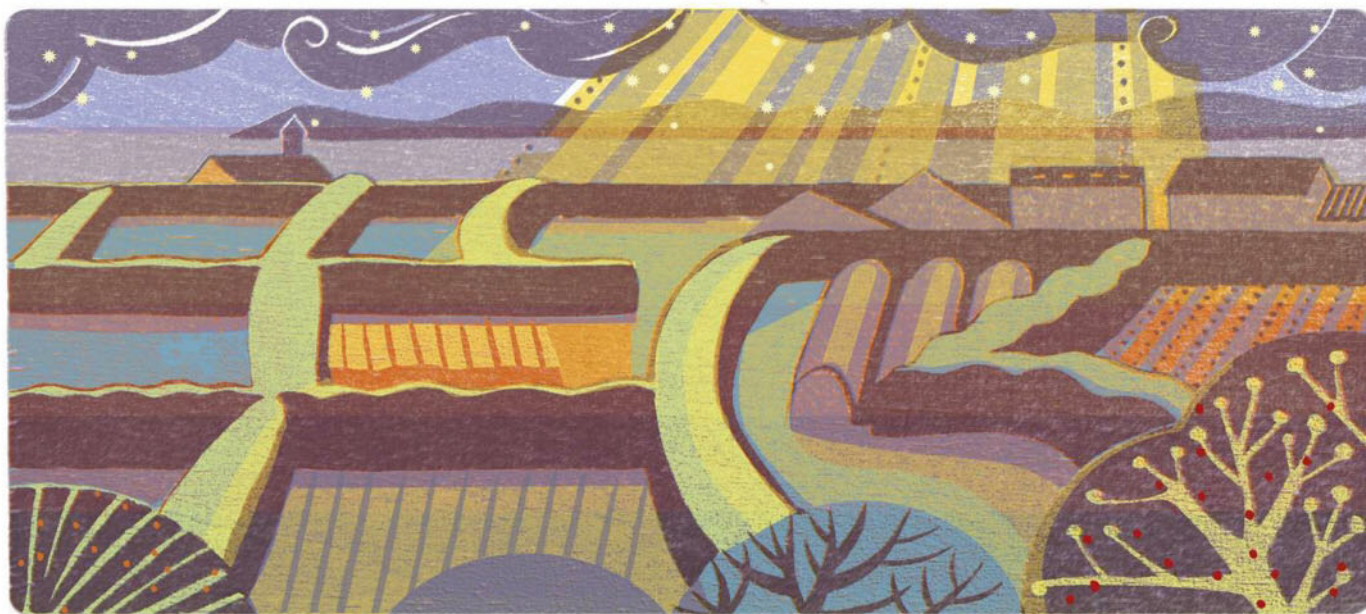
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IN THE GARDEN

Winter is a chance to step back from everyday tasks and take the long view when it comes to planning your garden's future

WORDS JOJO TULLOH ILLUSTRATIONS SARAH YOUNG

Gardening can make you short sighted. Heads down, knees bent and bottoms up, we spend a lot of time crouched low to the ground observing everything close up. Now when the trees are bare straighten your aching back, fix your eyes on the far horizon and see what you can learn from the world around you. As growers we exist in a long line stretching right back to the first forager-farmers clearing a little space in the woods, through the great 16th- and 17th-century herbalists and plantsmen, and on to the 19th-century plant hunters and market gardeners. We should all cultivate some awareness of our vegetable-growing past. See what you can find out about the heritage of your own local area and seek out old cultivars or crops that may be new to you but will thrive in your particular climatic conditions.

Look around and you may see there is evidence of past cultivation even in the heart of the city where a high, brick wall denotes a long-lost kitchen garden, or a decades-old apple tree edged in by buildings, reveals the site of a paved-over market garden. In a rural landscape observe what kind of hedges and boundaries have been made, these differ region by region from

the plashed hedges of East Anglia to the dry-stone walls of Yorkshire to the high-banked hedges of Devon and Cornwall designed to give shelter from sea winds. Seeing how our native materials have been used, whether wood, brick or stone can help us choose how best to shelter our own gardens.

Questions of boundaries have been much on my mind as I plan the garden we are making around a stone barn in north Devon. The building, known in local dialect as a 'linney', is a 19th-century structure containing hayloft and byre, built up against a bank with three arched openings on each side. It's in a good position, on the lower slopes of a river valley running up to Exmoor just a few miles from the coast. The acre of land has thick hedges on three sides but on the other has been fenced off with only a wire. Some kind of sheltering boundary needs to be made. It would be easy to plant the age-old barrier of hawthorn (haw comes from the Old English word *haga* or hedge) but all around are high-turfed banks topped by beech trees with knotted serpentine roots. A true Devon hedge will take time and skill but I like the idea of echoing the landscape rather than imposing on it and in doing so providing a haven for wildlife.

WHAT TO DO NOW

Before you order new seeds for next year, take stock both of what seeds you have that are still viable and what were this year's biggest successes. Short season tomato cultivars were my revelation with the 'Purple Ukraine' producing many kilos of glossy, goose

egg-sized fruits that were deliciously jammy when cooked and eaten in a bacon sandwich. Early cropping and good sized, the sweetly flavoured, fat French leek 'Monstrueux de Carentan' was ready mid September. To sow something right now what about pea shoots?

Fill a shallow tray or box with compost and sow seeds about 1cm apart. The vining pea 'Serge' has been specially chosen for its delicious, sweet-tasting tendrils and leaves, which can be mixed with other leaves to give your winter salad bowl a bit of variety.

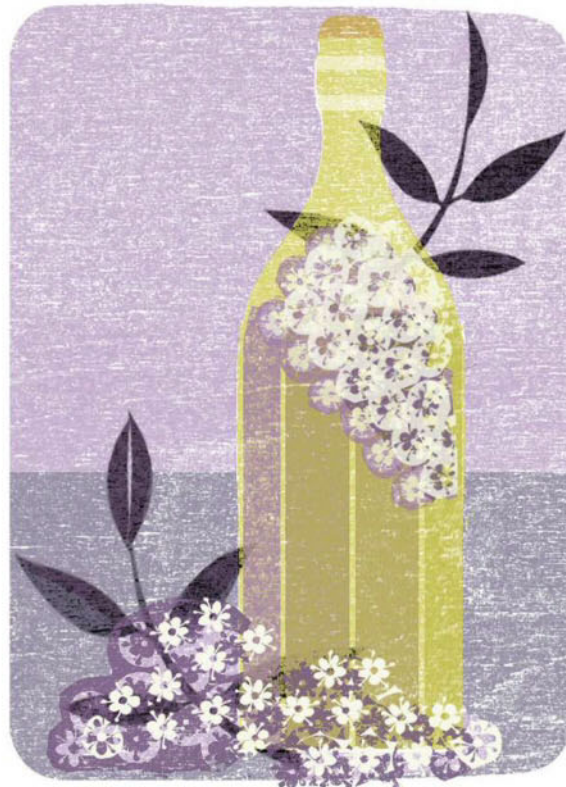
IN THE KITCHEN

As the year draws to a close Jojo finds ways to preserve summer's flavour through the raw months, and makes the most of a glut of grapes

There is a rawness to gardening at this time of year. The wind bites and fingers stumble numbly over simple tasks. I often like the idea of winter gardening more than the reality but I still want to cook with something I've grown, even if it's just a herb. Sage lives in a pot on the stone steps outside my kitchen door. Its soft, grey-green leaves are always good to stop and smell, and by frying them with butter you can use them to make the simplest of all sauces for stuffed pasta. Put the pasta (ravioli, tortellini or agnolotti) on to boil. Melt 100g of butter and fry with 16 sage leaves, let the butter caramelise and the solids separate but not burn and then add a ladleful of the pasta water, the sauce should foam and start to thicken. Add the drained pasta (just slightly undercooked) and cook for another 30 seconds on a medium heat, the sauce should be velvety and coat the pasta. Serve with lots of parmesan and black pepper.

Flavoured vinegars

The discovery of how to make many of our basic ingredients – cheese, bread, yoghurt – came about through some unknown culinary accident. Vinegar is no exception; wine left to oxidise will naturally turn to vinegar. (The word vinegar comes from the French *vin* meaning wine and *aigre* meaning sour.) You can make vinegar out of old wine or cider using yeast or a vinegar 'mother' (a cloudy film that is filled with vinegar-making bacteria), or by simply letting it sour (with more variable results) and can make a flavoured vinegar by infusing fruits or herbs in strong white vinegar or in a cruder form by letting fruit juice ferment. Most of us will start with the simplest process – infusion. Take cider or white wine vinegar and just add herbs or flowers. Stuff a bottle with tarragon leaves to preserve the flavour of tarragon year round or use basil or fresh chillies. You can infuse vinegar with elderflowers to make vinegar that has a delicate



sweet fruitiness. You can also ferment elderflowers with sugar to make a 'fizz' and then instead of drinking it, let it sour. The key is that the sugars must turn into 3 or 4 per cent alcohol before they can then become vinegar. Both blackcurrants and apple juice make good vinegars.

Verjuice

While most of us don't have a lot of excess wine to hand we often have sour fruits. This year I have been experimenting with fermenting a variety of crops either to make a natural soda (fermented with whey) or to make verjuice. The latter is a gentler acidulant useful in the kitchen when lemon juice or vinegar is too harsh but with the same brightening effect on flavour. Verjuice was a common ingredient in medieval kitchens (and is still

used in Iranian cooking) but over time it was superseded by the lemon. Verjuice was traditionally made with unfermented grapes or crab apples, which is perfect as the most plentiful sour crop I have are the many kilos of small green grapes I harvest each year from the vines that engulf my allotment shed. You can also use unripe apples or earlier in the year use currants, damsons or the tall American blueberry, *Vaccinium corymbosum*. If you can't wait until next year and still have lots of frozen berries (gooseberries or currants) you could defrost some and use those. Pulse 1kg of whole unblemished fruits in a food processor until you have a pulpy mass and strain through a sieve under light pressure. Place the liquid in a clean china bowl. Cover with a cloth and leave for three days (perhaps a little longer if your kitchen is cold), stir several times until all bubbling has ceased. Strain through a muslin or jelly bag and transfer to clean plastic bottles and store somewhere cool and dark. You can use the verjuice as a base for sauces in a salad dressing, added to braised or roasted vegetables, to deglaze pans after cooking meat or fish or make a dressing out of 2 tablespoons of olive oil and 200ml of verjuice and use it to baste roast chicken. □



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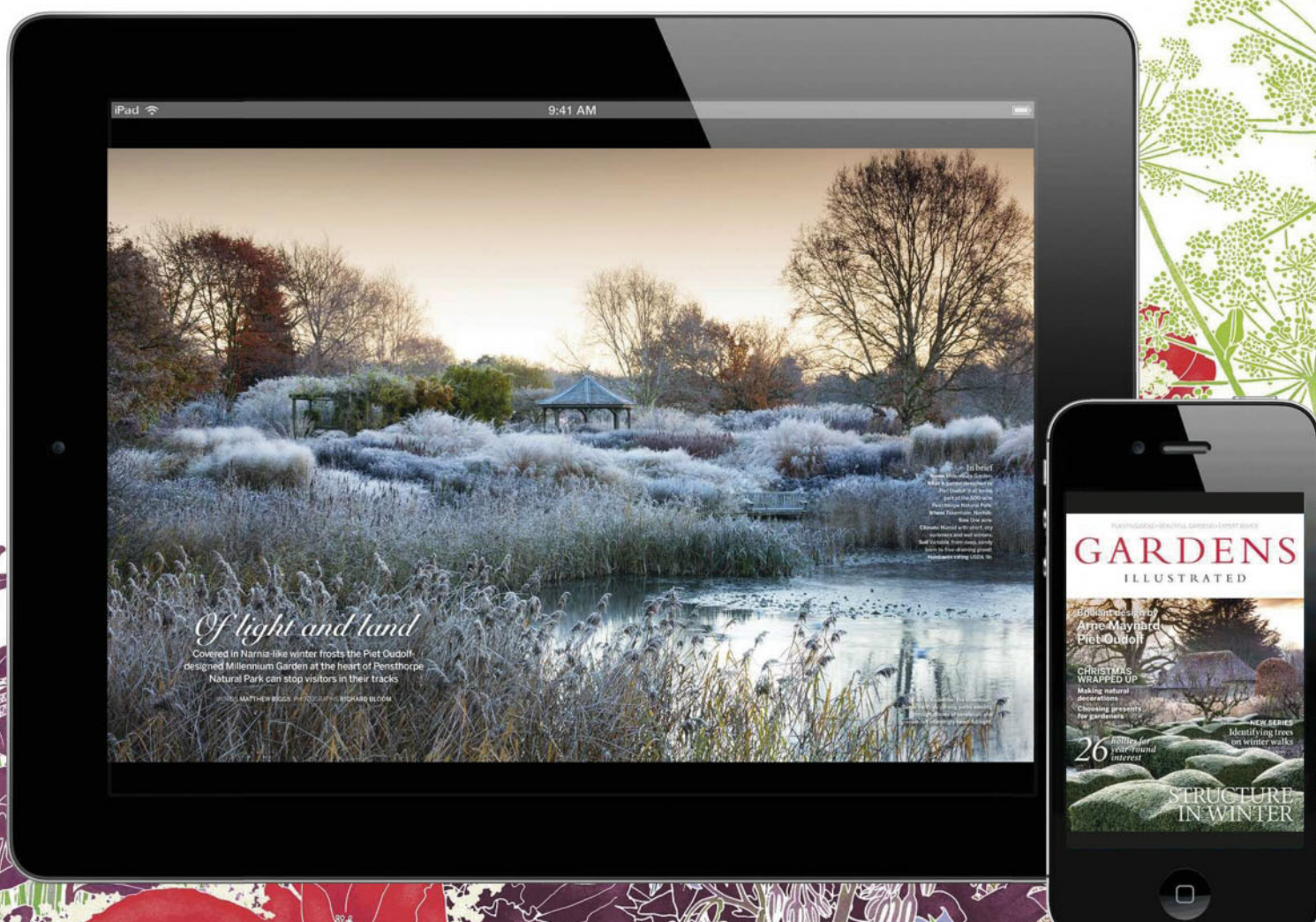


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John Everett Millais, *Myra's Revenge* (detail), 1851 © Tate, London



Miranda Janatka

Working as botanical collections horticulturist in Kew's Tropical Nursery means that Miranda gets to care for one of the most diverse plant collections in the world

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

First plant love I felt very emotionally attached to the oversized willow tree in my parents' small, suburban garden. I loved the swing built for me, and finding a natural and calming solitude by climbing up high into its branches and reeling in my rope ladder.

How did you come to gardening as a career? I enjoyed the challenge and rewards of being an inner-city teacher for a few years. However, after I lost my father, much younger than I expected to, I realised how precious time is and decided to take a leap into training for the career I had previously only dreamt about.

Favourite landscape Beyond my bias towards Kew, Benmore Botanic Garden in Scotland is a beautiful example of a brilliant plant collection curated without losing the unique atmospheric setting. The location is enchanting and the views spectacular.

Most valuable training? The Kew Diploma is a renaissance kind of education. Intensively studying subjects such as botany alongside landscape design, history and practical training equipped me with a skill set to really understand how plants and gardens work. It is a truly magical course, I really loved it.

Horticultural hero I am a great admirer of the work done by the pioneering plantswoman and nurserywoman Beth Chatto. I am also currently excited to see the new education facilities developing at her garden in Essex.

Favourite planting style I enjoy gardens the same way I enjoy a good meal. I want a completely immersive experience full of interesting ingredients, skilfully made and beautiful to look at. Both go well with a glass of wine.

Unsung hero of the plant world I don't know why more people aren't growing alpine plants in their window boxes. They suit the conditions so well and in the right medium are fairly low maintenance.

If you had to leave your garden in a hurry what one plant would you take with you? It would have to be my small handkerchief tree (*Davidia involucrata*) as it was my first ever actual graft attempt (a modified side veneer), and it took.

Contact You can follow Miranda's own work and horticultural musings on Twitter (@Miranda_J) and find out more about varied plant displays at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, at kew.org.uk

In brief

What Private family garden.

Where West Sussex.

Size 85 x 110m walled garden within nine acres of ornamental gardens, in 30 acres of grounds.

Soil Part green sand, part sandy loam.

Climate In a frost pocket.

Hardiness rating USDA 8.

Ancient and modern sit comfortably side by side in this walled garden designed by Arne Maynard and managed by Ben Pope. The undulating forms of the clipped box have a further dimension when dusted by frost.



The secret garden

A walled garden within a West Sussex estate
hides a magical space given a contemporary
twist by designer Arne Maynard

WORDS JODIE JONES PHOTOGRAPHS RICHARD BLOOM



In the hardest days of winter you will find Ben Pope in the walled garden he cares for, snug in the tea shed with a mug next to him on the pitted wooden table, scouring seed catalogues by the light of a low-hanging lamp.

“I love this quieter time of year, when I am planning for the months ahead and picturing what the garden will look like then,” says Ben. It is good that he cherishes the moment. As head gardener of a 30-acre estate that includes more than nine acres of ornamental borders, topiary, water features, woodland and a lake, neither he nor the two other full-time gardeners who work with him get much time for quiet contemplation.

The grounds wrap around an impressive Queen Anne house approached down a winding drive lined with rhododendrons and, in the depth of winter, with a faint layer of mist clinging to the frosty meadows and low sun slanting through the skeletal trees, there is a palpable air of orderly anticipation.

It was all rather different 11 years ago, when designer Arne Maynard was invited to visit the property and advise its new owners on what to do with the gardens. He found a sleeping beauty, faded and overgrown, but ready to be reawakened. “My initial impression was of something romantic and very lovely,” says Arne. “The house sat in a beautiful environment with a view of river and meadows and I felt strongly that anything too dominant in the way of flower beds around the house would distract from this. The walled garden, however, was a different matter – beautiful, even in its chaos – and it was clear that this was where the ornamental focus should lie.”

This walled garden is sited unusually close to the main house, and at some time in the 1930s the old entrance was replaced with a moon gate that introduces a note of story-book whimsy. When

To continue turn to page 44

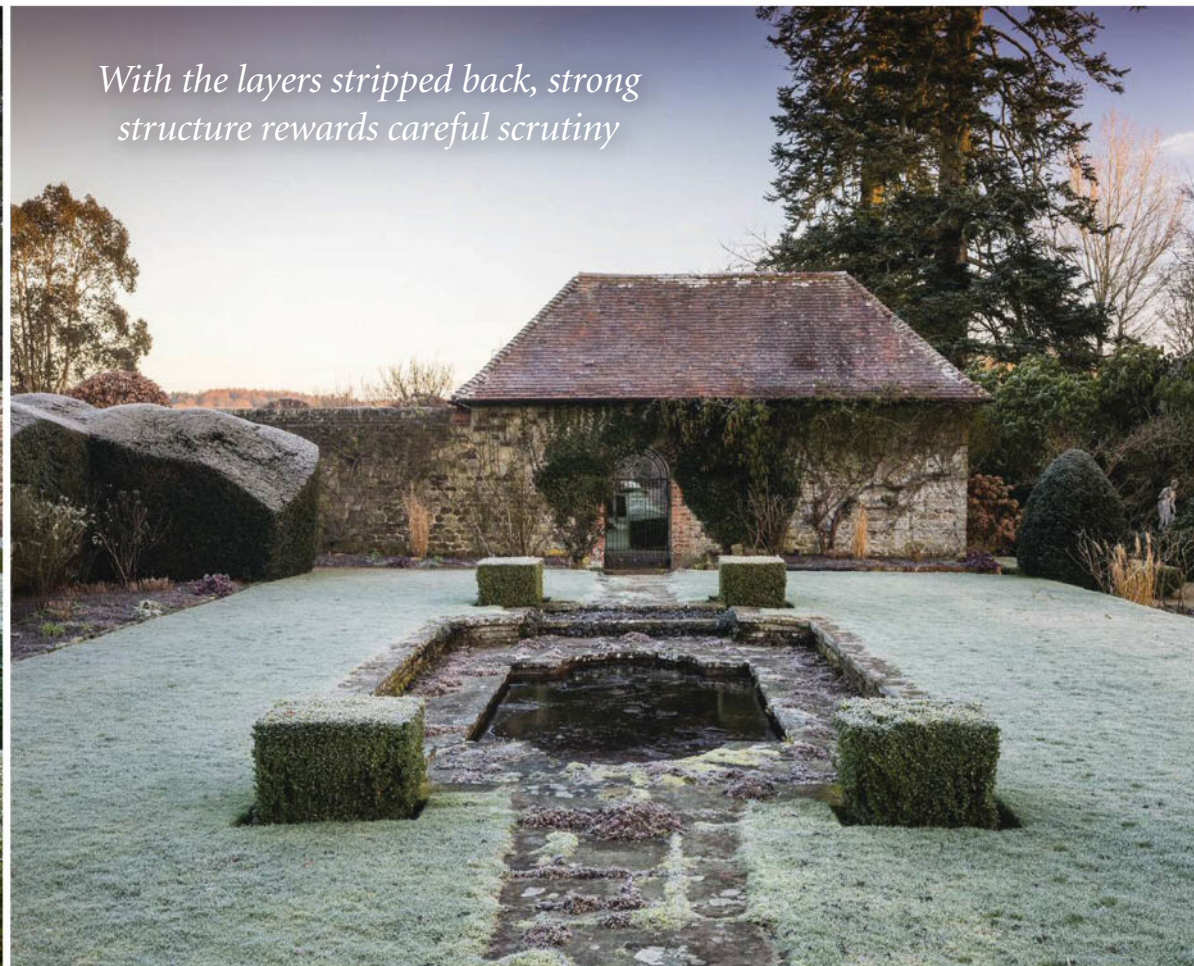


Clockwise from top left

In the summer, every inch of soil is hidden by vegetables, fruit and flowers for cutting; only in winter can the true layout and skilled husbandry be fully appreciated.

Outside the walled garden, a stone-edged pool provides a quiet counterpoint to the intense planting inside the walls.

One quadrant of the garden is given over to an ornamental grass spiral that offers a gentle contrast to the more formal box hedge. In summer it conceals a picnic spot, and in winter is a beautiful contemporary tapestry.



With the layers stripped back, strong structure rewards careful scrutiny



Hypericum x inodorum 'Magical Universe' (= 'Kolmuni')'s fruits sparkle with frost.



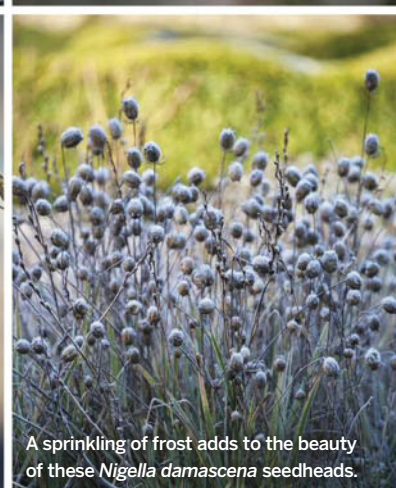
Viburnum x bodnantense 'Dawn', adds fragrance to the winter garden.



Cloud-pruned *Buxus sempervirens* hedges provide a sculptural element.



The silky tassels of *Miscanthus nepalensis* add delicacy to the strong structure.



A sprinkling of frost adds to the beauty of these *Nigella damascena* seedheads.



The rich-red hips of *Rosa* 'Herbstfeuer' stand out as bright jewels in the garden.



Making the most of winter

Head gardener Ben Pope has worked in partnership with designer Arne Maynard and introduced many innovations of his own. Here he offers five tips to make the most of a winter garden.

- 1 The layout of the garden and its paths** can have as much visual interest as topiary and hedges. Straight lines encourage the eye to move quickly, while curves are more gentle and leisurely. Sharp corners attract attention, and can act as visual resting places.
- 2 In low, winter sun you can engineer dramatic effects** that exploit the bright highlights and long shadows of trees, topiary and garden structures.
- 3 Repetition is a useful tool.** Repeating various shapes, surfaces and materials around the garden will encourage the eye to link different spaces together, reinforcing the underlying sense of movement and interest.
- 4 Contrast textures in your planting** as much as your hard landscaping. For example, the bones of miscanthuses and sedums work particularly well when sited close to the smooth surfaces of well-clipped topiary and hedges.
- 5 Vistas are key.** In winter there is far less to distract the viewer, which helps to increase the visual impact of a well-crafted vista.

A photograph of a winter garden. In the foreground, there are several raised garden beds with low wooden borders. Some beds contain green plants, while others are covered with a layer of white material, possibly straw or mulch. To the left, a wooden fence runs across the frame. In the middle ground, there are several large, gnarled, and bare fruit trees, likely trained in a traditional style. A stone well is visible near the center. The background features a dense line of trees and a clear sky with a soft gradient from blue to orange, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and historical.

*Gloriously gnarled apples speak
of the history of the place*

Demonstrating that there is great beauty in utility, the winter framework of trained fruit trees, timber-edged beds and robust training posts is easy to appreciate.



The fluffy white heads of *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Kleine Fontäne', 'Malepartus' and 'Gracillimus', and clipped beech sentries hide a sunken lawn that is reached by a spiralling path.



*"The walled garden was beautiful, even
in its chaos; it was clear that this was where
the ornamental focus should lie"*

Clockwise from top left

The interplay of light and low shadow is a particular pleasure in this area outside the walls, where head gardener Ben Pope has designed a rectangular mirror pool overlooked by neat yew buttresses.

The old four-gabled building and moss-covered well are reminders of the long history of this walled garden, while the gnarled wisteria and ferns enclosed by hazel and brown willow hurdles add to the timeless feel and sense of place.

An elaborate and whimsical metalwork gate was added in the 1930s. Set within an ivy-and-lichen-covered moon gateway it acts as a perfect precursor to the combination of traditional and contemporary planting within the walled garden.

▷ Arne first walked through it, he found overgrown apple trees in a carpet of couch grass and bindweed, and four vast beds divided by an intersecting pair of paths.

“I felt there was much that was fundamentally right. I didn’t want to disturb the basic layout or remove those gloriously gnarled apples that spoke of the history of the place, but the beds were far too big to manage effectively, so I looked at ways of subdividing each quarter into manageable spaces,” says Arne.

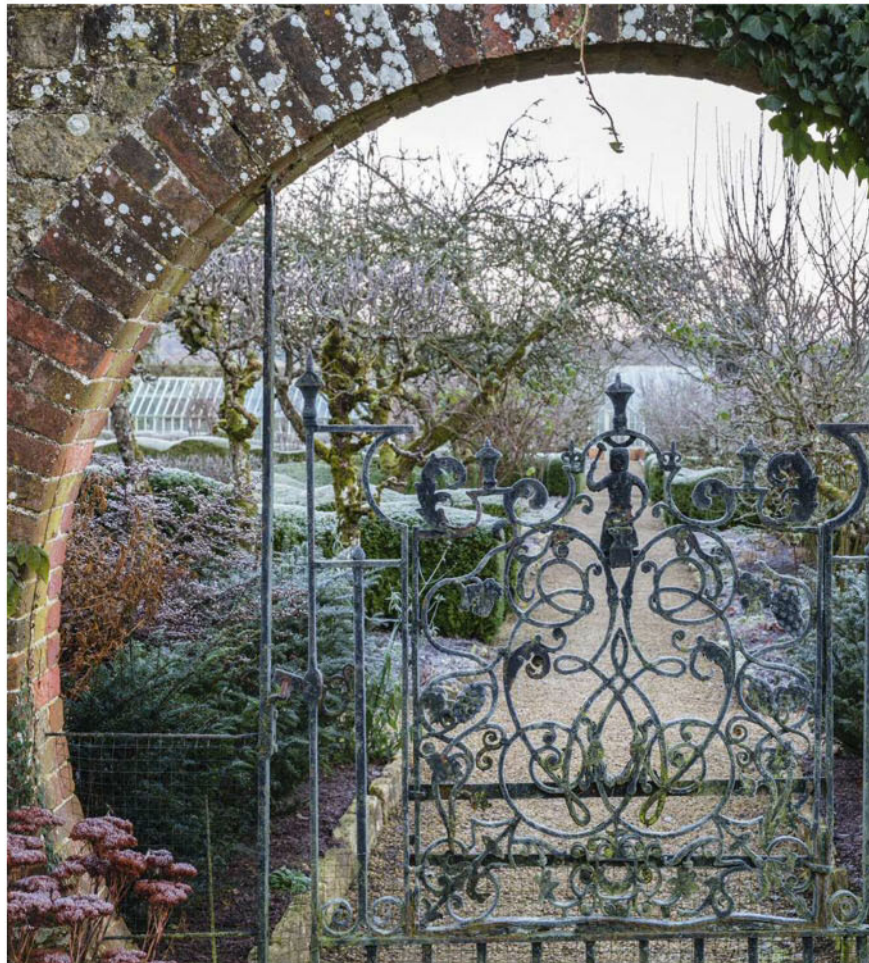
Stripped of the distracting froth of summer planting, the structure he developed is an ornamental feature in its own right – traditional yet modern, like a monochrome Mondrian. Three of the large quadrants have been subdivided by secondary paths to create space for raised vegetable beds, soft fruit and flowers to cut for the house. As you would expect in a garden designed by Arne, everything is quietly beautiful, including such practical elements as the oak posts and parallel bars that support raspberries, blackberries and fan-trained cherries.

The fourth quadrant has been reimagined as a picnic area, with a sunken central lawn reached by a gently spiralling path. In summer, a ruff of ornamental grasses and copper beech topiary creates a living wall within the stone walls of the garden.

The sense of fairytale wonder is only emphasised by a lovely old dovecote that dominates one corner of the garden, and the wide, low box hedges lining many of the paths. Their sides are straight, but their tops undulate unexpectedly, throwing down shadows that emphasise their three-dimensional solidity.

There is topiary elsewhere around the estate, most notably a 72m cloud-pruned box hedge running along the back of the house. This is clipped in the Japanese style, with deep, precise crevices carved between each mound, and it looks particularly effective in winter. “It never fails to put a smile on everyone’s face,” says Ben. “Except for the person who has to trim it.”

In a garden of this size and complexity, there are so many interconnecting elements that it is hard to absorb it all in a single sitting. In summer its fecundity is almost overwhelming but at this quietest time of year, with the layers stripped back, its strong structure rewards careful scrutiny, whether you are wandering the estate on a misty morning, or admiring it through the rain-spattered window of a cosy shed, with a mug of tea in your hand. □





Silvery catkins of *Garrya elliptica* 'James Roof' create a stylish display all winter.



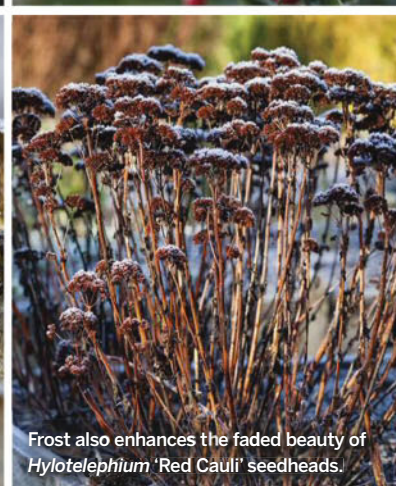
Evergreen *Ruscus aculeatus* produces a rich winter crop of bright-red berries.



A covering of frost gives an elegant silver sheen to *Cynara cardunculus*'s leaves.



Hydrangea arborescens 'Annabelle' sparkles under a dusting of frost.



Frost also enhances the faded beauty of *Hylotelephium* 'Red Cauli' seedheads.



The purple berries of *Callicarpa bodinieri* var. *giraldii* 'Profusion' are arrestingly vivid.



Deck the halls

Brighten up your Christmas table with these festive arrangements using dried flowers, evergreens and winter-flowering shrubs

WORDS BEA ANDREWS PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREW MONTGOMERY



Wall hanging

A simple, natural design that uses fresh, scented evergreens, dried flowers, foliages and easy-care air plants that will make brilliant house plants after Christmas. *Cymbidium* orchids with their velvety petals and a long vase life create a luxurious feel.

You'll need

- 1 hazel stick
- 4 assorted twigs
- 2 dried leafy oak twigs
- 2 dried fern leaves
- 1 length contorted willow
- 2 rosemary sprigs
- 8 *Eucalyptus* stems
- 4 dried *Hydrangea* florets
- 8 strands of Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*)
- 9 orchid flowers from a *Cymbidium* stem
- 6 small air plants (*Tillandsia*)
- 2 small succulents (*Echeveria*)
- 9 small, plastic flower tubes
- 3-4 silk ribbons
- Scissors, secateurs
- Florist's binding wire

To make

1. Using a hazel stick of around 60cm as a frame, wire your assorted twigs (40-50cm) to it horizontally. I used silver birch, including some with a covering of lichen. Attach one of the silk ribbons for hanging.
2. Wire *Eucalyptus* and rosemary foliages to the main stem. Arrange the dried flowers, ferns and smaller (20cm) twigs of leafy oak in a natural shape, and wire them securely to the longer twigs.
3. Cut the flowers off the *Cymbidium* stem and place each one in a water-filled flower tube. Wire these to the twigs, scattering them through the design with the succulents and air plants. Wire bunched strands of moss to one end of the frame to enhance its trailing shape. Add the remaining lengths of ribbon to hang down and place over a chimney breast or on a dining room wall.



Table runner weight

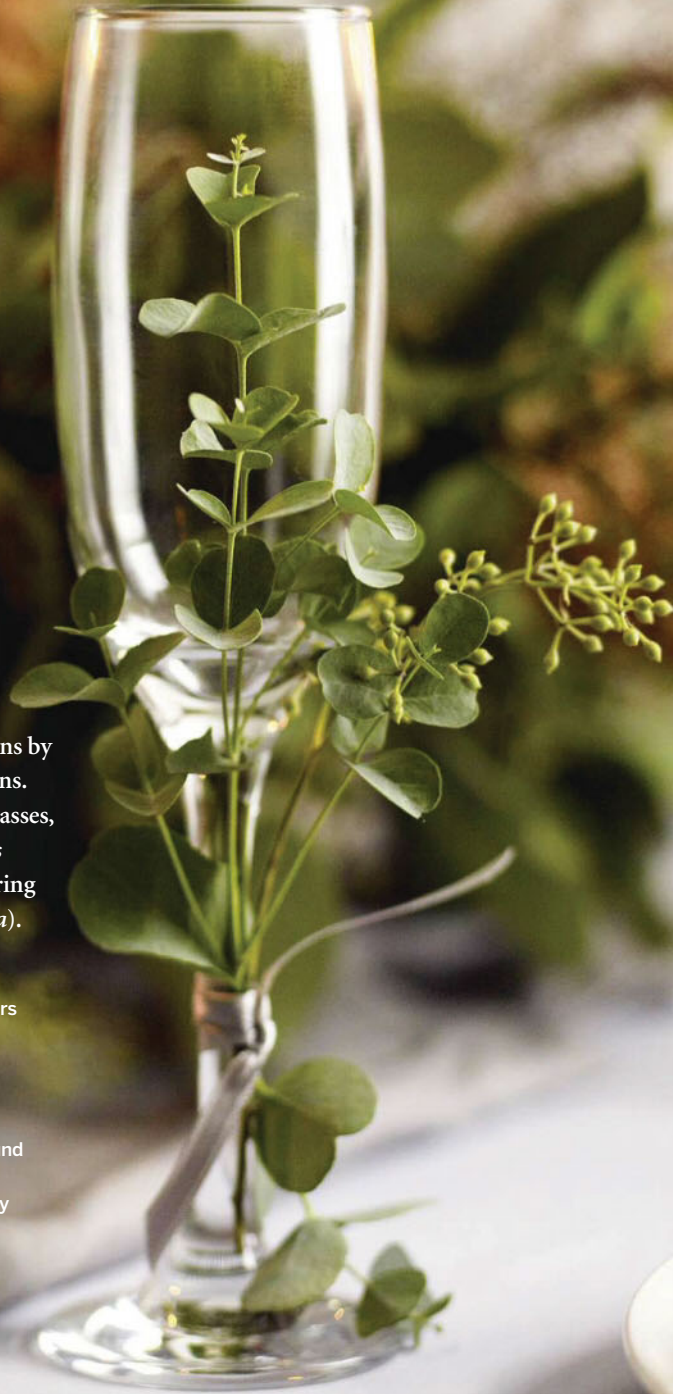
Aromatic, shrubby evergreen herbs, such as rosemary, sage and bay, and winter foliage, such as *Eucalyptus*, *Pittosporum* and *Sarcococca*, are all suited to this mini-posy. I used *Eucalyptus populnea* but any berried eucalyptus will work. You'll find berried eucalyptus sold in florists, although it is something of a misnomer as the berries are actually flower buds.

You'll need

- 1 bushy branch or 10 woody sprigs of rosemary
- 1 berried *Eucalyptus* sprig
- Natural jute twine
- Scissors, secateurs
- Pearl-headed pin

To make

1. Leave the rosemary and *Eucalyptus* sprigs to rest in water for 24 hours before arranging. Allow to dry then form into a small posy. Tie together with twine, leaving a long piece at each end to attach to the table linen.
2. Gather the table runner at the top end of the table and position your posy just short of the table top. Tie it to the linen with the twine.
3. To stop it moving, secure the posy to the table runner and tablecloth at the back with a pin. ▷



Festive wine glass

Create simple, thoughtful table decorations by adding scented foliage to glasses or napkins.

To transform your wine or champagne glasses, use soft, small-leaved stems of *Eucalyptus* or choose sprigs of scented, winter-flowering shrubs such as Christmas box (*Sarcococca*).

You'll need

- 3 *Eucalyptus* stems
- Florist's stem tape
- Satin ribbon
- Scissors, secateurs

To make

1. Arrange all three *Eucalyptus* stems in a small bunch with one facing downwards. Wrap stem tape around the middle of the bunch.
2. Cut a piece of thin satin ribbon and tie it around the stems to cover the tape.
3. Position the bunch on the wine glass vertically and attach it with ribbon.



Foliage pendant

Transform a ceiling pendant with scented foliage to create a woodland-inspired display over your dinner table.

You'll need

- 25 small-leaved *Eucalyptus* stems
- 7 berried *Eucalyptus* stems
- Natural jute twine
- Scissors, secateurs
- Florist's adhesive pot tape

To make

1. Measure your ceiling light pendant to determine the right length of stem for the longer lengths of foliage. You'll need to add 15cm to the stem length so it will slightly overhang the pendant's edge. Cut the 25 small-leaved stems to the right size and dry them off thoroughly if they have been kept in water.
2. Arrange the longer lengths in a circle around the top of the pendant, holding them in place. When it is completely covered, secure the stems with pot tape. To soften the shape, add shorter lengths of berried *Eucalyptus* around the top half. Cover the tape with twine for a natural finish. I used the small-leaved *E. parviflora* for the longer lengths and *E. populnea*, for the shorter lengths, but you could use a mix of other soft, arching evergreen stems, such as *Sarcococca* or *Pittosporum*. □





Whatever the time of year, a walk through woodland is always enhanced if you can identify the trees you see.

KNOW YOUR TREES

Part 1 Deciduous natives

In the first of a four-part series, Lia Leendertz helps us become better acquainted with trees

WORDS LIA LEENDERTZ PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM



As excitable new students at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh we thought our tutors were joking when, halfway through our first term, they presented us with a bundle of deciduous tree branches to identify. “But it’s winter,” we laughed. “There are no leaves!” They just smiled wryly and led us out to the arboretum. Over the winter months we slowly learned about these trees from the inside out: the shape, colour and arrangement of the buds; the feel, texture and, sometimes even, scent of the bark; the tree’s silhouette against the Edinburgh skyline. When the leaves finally appeared, it almost felt like cheating: who needs such fripperies when you have come to know a tree so intimately?

On the one hand, this knowledge has come to feel like a bit of a superpower, a spot of horticultural hocus pocus. On the other hand, knowing the difference between oak and ash, beech and hornbeam, feels like the sort of basic knowledge we should all have under our belts, like the ability to tie a slip knot and the setting point for jam. In this series, we will show you the key features to help you identify four groups of common trees, including conifers, hedgerow trees, and big park and street trees, starting this month with the native deciduous trees that you are likely to encounter on your own winter woodland walks. ▸

USEFUL INFORMATION

You’ll find all of the trees featured at Westonbirt, The National Arboretum, the perfect place for a winter walk.

Address Westonbirt, Tetbury, Gloucestershire GL8 8QS.

Tel 0300 067 4890. **Web** forestry.gov.uk

Open Every day, except Christmas Day, 9am-5pm. Last entry 4pm December to February, 4.30pm March to November.



Quercus robur common oak

The oak is the tree that is most strongly associated with the English countryside and is the UK's most common tree, particularly prominent in central and southern woodland. *Quercus robur* is known as the English, common or pedunculate oak, and is distinct from the other British native oak *Quercus petraea*, the durmast or sessile oak, a more upwards-reaching tree. The common oak has long been planted in forests for its strong timber, its bark and its acorns. Each tree can live for up to a thousand years. Within its wide, spreading canopy can live an ecosystem of birds, lichens, fungi, caterpillars, squirrels, dormice and bats. Look for oaks in ancient woodland, 18th-century parkland or standing alone majestically in farmland.

1 Bark

Young oaks have smooth, silvery-brown bark. As trees age, this grows rugged and is covered in finger-shaped platelets with deep fissures in between.

2 Leaves

Oak leaves are longer than they are wide and have five or six deep, rounded lobes and short stalks. Leaves first emerge in mid-May, turning yellowy brown in autumn,

and are often held on the tree late in the year.

3 Winter twig

The winter twig is smooth and silvery brown with brown clusters of buds concentrated at the tips. These alternate, but spiral around the twig in a haphazard manner.

4 Acorns

The oak's seeds are acorns: shiny, ovoid fruits held tightly in textured

cups. They start green and slowly turn brown, eventually loosening from the cup and dropping to the ground.

5 Silhouette

The oak tree silhouette is sturdy and wide, low and spreading, often increasingly so with age. The tree has a gnarled look, with each of the branches kinked and snaking outwards.



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Ash leaves and branches have a soft, airy quality about their leaves and branches.

Fraxinus excelsior common ash

Ash is graceful, tall and striking in the landscape. The *excelsior* in its Latin name means high, elevated or lofty, and ashes can reach heights of around 45 metres. Ash is the third most common tree in Britain and has long been exalted for its strong, lightweight and easily worked wood, which is also of brilliant burning quality. But they are now under threat from Chalara dieback disease, which has caused widespread damage in continental Europe and has now spread to Britain. Evidence from Europe suggests that older trees may be able to withstand attacks for some time, before eventually being weakened enough to succumb to attacks from other pathogens. It is a worrying time for these beautiful trees.

1 Bark

Young ash bark is smooth and grey brown, but as the trees age it becomes deeply fissured, often in diamond shapes with a suggestion of zigzags.

2 Leaves

Each leaf comprises three to six pairs of elegant, tapering leaflets, arranged in pairs along the leaf stalk, plus a single leaflet at the end. Diva-like, the leaves

emerge in late spring and drop in early autumn.

3 Winter bud

Ash buds are very distinctive, making the ash tree one of the easiest to identify in winter. The fat, black, pointed buds are borne in opposite pairs.

4 Keys

The seeds, known as keys, hang in heavy, shaggy bunches from

the tree: lime green in summer, yellow in early autumn, rusty brown in winter, when they are very prominent.

5 Silhouette

Elegant, graceful and tall, often with a domed canopy. When trees are mature the lower branches weep down towards the earth before turning up again at the tips.



With their dense canopies, beeches often form great stands of woodland trees.

Fagus sylvatica beech

You will often find beech trees growing only among their own, particularly on free-draining, chalky and sandy soils. Beech is particularly good at snaffling every scrap of light, and in summer beech woodlands can be gloomy, strangely empty places. Beech seedlings can happily grow beneath the canopies, being expert at capturing low light themselves, but little else can, and the bigger trees finish the job by sending their roots snaking across the surface, reducing germination opportunities further. In autumn this monopolistic behaviour can be forgiven, when the trees turn into a mass of a pure shimmering copper, until even the air seems to take on a golden, honey-tinged glow – one of the great spectacles of the tree year.

1 Bark

When trees are young the bark is grey and smooth with some horizontal markings. As the trees age, the bark becomes rougher with snaking vertical plates, sometimes cracked horizontally.

2 Leaves

Leaves emerge lime green in spring, unfolding like fans and covered in silvery, silky hairs. They turn dark green in summer, and

vibrant copper in autumn. Young trees hold leaves all winter.

3 Winter twig

Thin, elegant, dark-brown stems hold large, sharply pointed buds that are placed alternately and are angled away from the stems, rather than held close to it.

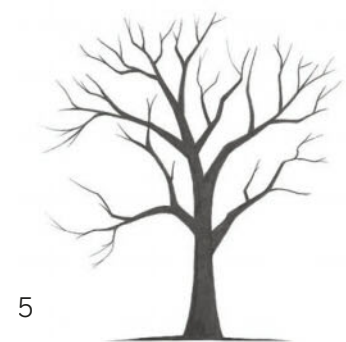
4 Beech mast/nuts

In autumn clusters of pale-brown, spiky seed cases drop to the

ground and peel themselves open, each revealing three shiny, three-sided beech nuts within.

5 Silhouette

The beech silhouette is tall and broad and straight limbed. It has a great number of branches that reach confidently up and out from the main trunk.

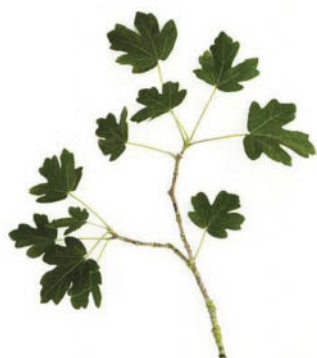




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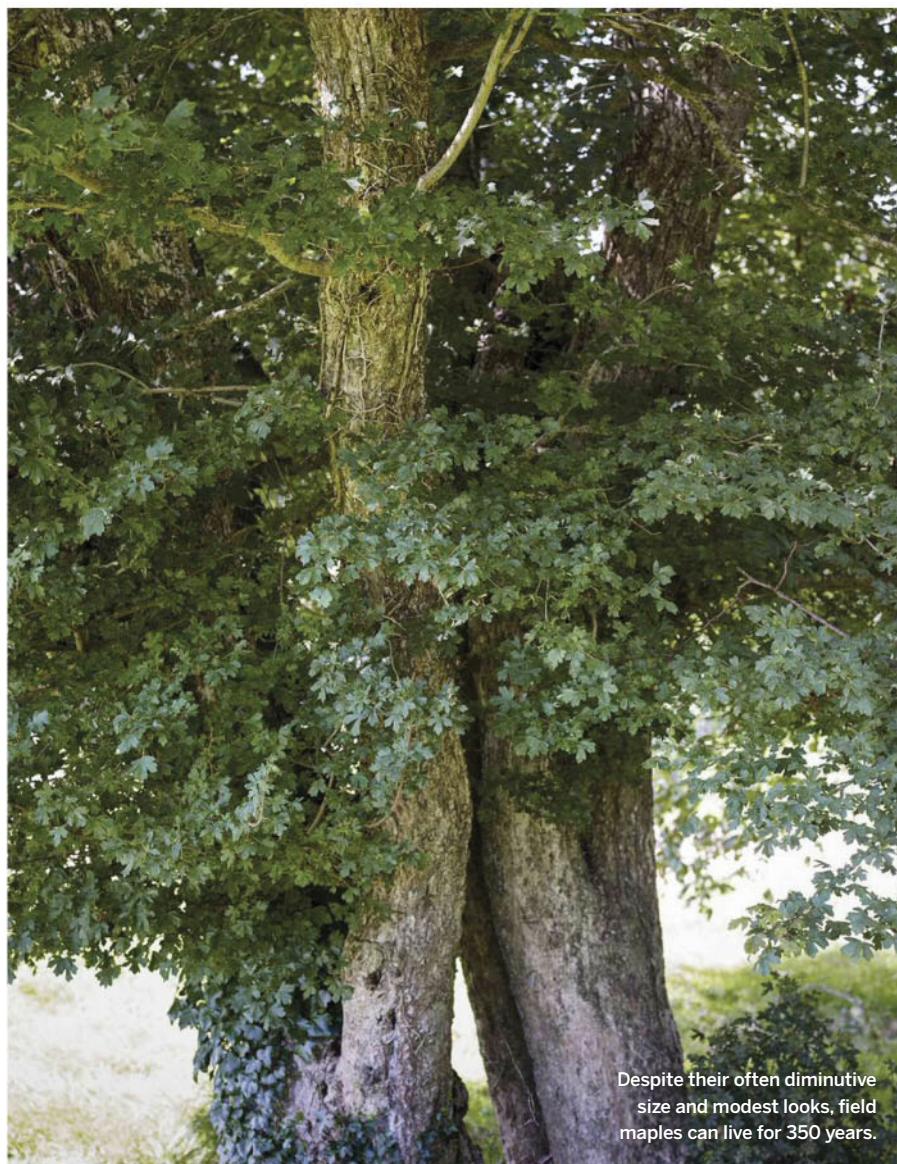
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Despite their often diminutive size and modest looks, field maples can live for 350 years.

Acer campestre field maple

Field maple is often found sprouting merrily from the tops of old hedges, the some-time hedge member that got away, only to flaunt its escape for many years to come, daring the hedge trimmers to do their worst. It is still very often used as a hedge, as it has small leaves and takes happily to being moulded and shaped. It is a bit of a shame that they have come to be thought of as hedging material, as they can form sweet, compact trees with pretty autumn foliage that you might recognise as the butter-yellow element of the native mixed-hedge autumn tapestry. Field maples are sometimes planted in gardens or parks, but are most often seen in the wild, in woods and scrubland, and on chalk downland.

1 Bark/twigs

The bark and twigs take on a 'corky' appearance from a fairly young age, looking as if they have been deeply notched and carved. Even the twigs have a 'winged' look.

2 Flowers

Appearing in clusters hanging along the branches in spring, the flowers are cup-shaped and yellow and green, and contain both male and female parts.

3 Leaves

Bright, mid-green leaves have the classic *Acer palmatum* shape with five rounded lobes. The leaf stalk is red, and exudes a white sap when broken.

4 Winged seeds

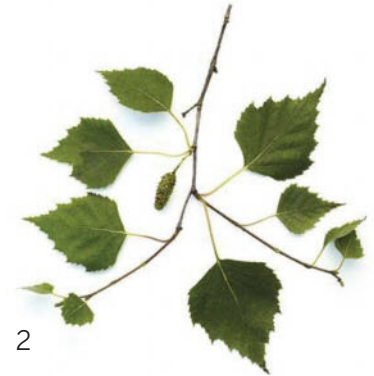
Large, winged seeds develop by late summer, starting off green with a pink tinge and turning brown in autumn. They are paired together and set along a horizontal plane.

5 Silhouette

Acer campestre has quite a shrubby look to it but can also grow into a sweet and compact tree. It has a round, dense crown and is low branching.



A popular garden and park tree, the silver birch comes into its own in winter.



Betula pendula silver birch

Although silver birch can be found all over the country, it is at heart a tree of the north, of moors, commons, heaths and mountainsides. It is a pioneer species, shedding large amounts of seed each year and germinating freely and determinedly, even in poor soil and harsh conditions. As such, it was one of the first trees to follow the retreating ice after the ice age, and will often be the tree that fills the gap left by a heathland fire. In summer woodland it can look rather lost and insignificant, but when autumn comes its delicate leaves light up golden. It steps into the limelight even more determinedly in winter, when its bark glows bright and ghostly against a muted backdrop of browns, beiges and rusts.

1 Bark

Pure white or – more poetically – silver bark peels away to reveal even whiter bark beneath. Black horizontal lines appear with age and the base of the trunk grows black.

2 Leaves

Small, triangular, mid-green leaves turn gold in autumn. The silver birch is among the last of the trees to drop its leaves,

sometimes holding on until the catkins appear in spring.

3 Male catkins

These male catkins are long and yellow, and dangle from the ends of the branches.

4 Female catkins

Silver birch is monoecious, meaning both male and female catkins are found on the same tree, from April to May. These female catkins, with

tiny seeds visible, are shorter, smaller and stockier than the male, and start out bright green, but after successful pollination they thicken and change colour to a reddish brown.

5 Silhouette

Silver birches are tall, delicate and graceful trees, and the tips of the branches droop down towards the earth to give a slight weeping effect.



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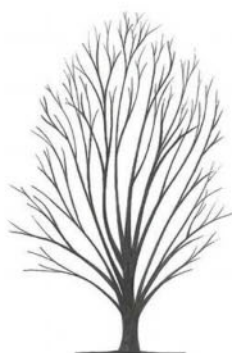
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The hornbeam is most often found in old woodland, where it may be coppiced for its wood.

Carpinus betulus common hornbeam

Poor old hornbeam is often mistaken for beech, which it resembles on several fronts. There are a couple of identifying features that enable you to tell them apart easily, though, most notably the catkins in spring and the hop-like fruits in autumn and winter. It is a more robust-looking tree too, with more determinedly corrugated leaves, and what could pass for rippling muscles below the bark surface. And it is not just an impression of strength: hornbeam has the toughest wood of all and was long commonly known as 'iron wood', used to make cogs, axles and spokes before iron was readily available. In gardens it is usually trimmed and shaped into smart hedges.

1 Bark

The pale-grey bark has vertical markings and the trunk sometimes develops a twist and muscular ridges as the tree ages. On the twigs buds lie flat against the stems.

2 Catkins

Long, dangling catkins form on the tree in spring. These are the male catkins. Female catkins form on the same tree but are smaller and less noticeable.

3 Leaves

Like beech leaves but smaller and with a deeper groove. A beautiful fresh green in spring, they turn yellow then soft brown in autumn, and on small trees or hedges won't drop until spring.

4 Fruit/seeds

Fruits, or samaras, are short chains of three winged nuts that bunch together to look like hops, and hang in the tree long after leaves fall.

5 Silhouette

A tall and broad woodland tree, handsome and well-balanced. The lower branches will droop as the tree grows and mature specimens make wonderful climbing trees.

Lisa Delplace

The principal and CEO of US landscape design company Oehme, van Sweden on pragmatism in gardening and how the OvS spirit continues to flourish in the 21st century

WORDS TIM RICHARDSON PORTRAIT CHARLIE HOPKINSON

It's a pretty standard interview question: so what was the garden you grew up with like? Lisa Delplace's response initially sounds fairly standard, too: it was her mother who was the gardener at the family home on the outskirts of Detroit, where she created "the blowsiest ever border" with mop-headed hydrangeas, peonies and roses. But then, as an afterthought, Lisa mentions that in winter her father "turned the entire back yard into an ice hockey pitch", pooling water evenly across the lawn, flattening out bumps and clearing snow. "My dad and brothers played hockey – our house became a nexus for all the boys in the neighbourhood," she recalls.

Perhaps this seasonal transformation at least instilled in the young Lisa a sense that a garden might be a functional space that caters to the needs of its owners. When she graduated in 1988 from the Masters programme in landscape design at Michigan State University, she came top of her class. It was at this point she started looking for a job, and it so happened that the very first interview she had was in Washington DC with James van Sweden. Extrovert and exacting, he was one half of the design duo Oehme, van Sweden (OvS), the landscape company founded in 1977 with Wolfgang Oehme that rapidly established itself as the US specialist in naturalistic planting.

"Jim hired me within 15 minutes," Lisa recalls, "so I didn't go anywhere else. Some of my professors were like, 'Those grass guys, they'll never amount to anything. It won't last.' They had all gone through Harvard in the 1960s – all clean lines and Modernism – so they really bristled at it."

But last it did. And so did Lisa. Barring a four-year hiatus with a firm in Vermont, she has spent her entire 30-year career with OvS and is now CEO and joint design principal with two colleagues who have been with the company just as long. In a US context it's a smallish firm (around 25 people), which Lisa says is a deliberate policy that allows the principals to remain 'hands-on'.

"The OvS style was considered a metaphor for the American prairie or meadow," she observes. A key early work was the landscape at the Federal Reserve Building in Washington DC, where Oehme's signature plantings of perennials and grasses – essentially a distillation of the style developed by Karl Foerster in post-war public parks in East Germany – initially caused dismay among those expecting smart box hedges. "We forget that what OvS was doing in the 1970s was truly shocking to people," Lisa says. "It was a very bold gesture – and people were attracted to that."

Oehme died in 2011 and van Sweden two years later, so the question arises about legacy – how can you perpetuate a house style

that is so intimately bound up with two powerful personalities who are no longer with us? Lisa defends the case robustly, stating that she and her colleagues are remaining true to the OvS spirit. But doesn't this style look dated now? I ask, recalling the day I spent with van Sweden when he proudly told me that he and Oehme only ever had a palette of 25 to 30 plants 'on the truck' at any one time, and that they never exceeded this number of species. By the 1990s the OvS look had become an immediately recognisable 'brand', with certain plants (notably *Echinacea* and *Rudbeckia*) familiar to the point of cliché.

Lisa responds with, "I want to challenge you on that." Which is, I think, her way of saying, "You are talking complete baloney."

Lisa's challenge is that the OvS methodology developed fundamentally after the turn of the 21st century. "The plant lists are much broader and our work is so much more diverse now," she asserts. "For example we have just done a big ranch project in Montana and there's not a rudbeckia in sight."

But doesn't that, in turn, mean that the OvS brand is simply being diluted? "No, I don't see that as a problem at all," Lisa answers. "We continue to push forward with a plant palette that is just as engaging. I have just finished a project in Portland that is very OvS in style because of what I call the 'massing structure' of the plantings. In wild meadows you begin to see or read patterns over acres and acres. In our work the drifts are stronger, the massing is a little denser. We are designing – that's where the gesture comes in. I don't see it as a right or a wrong, but I do see it as a design decision."

She adds that there is now a greater emphasis in their practice on the challenges of sustainability, specifically rainwater run-off or storm drainage, which is today the single biggest problem in American landscape design: "You have to account for every single raindrop," Lisa notes, ruefully. Gone are the days when the likes of Jim and Wolfgang could simply roll up in their old VW Beetle and start planting, yet the loyalty across three decades of key colleagues means that OvS as a company clearly retains much of its original spirit and idealism. Led by Lisa, the naturalistic planting style pioneered at OvS remains as relevant to 21st-century USA as it ever did. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Oehme, van Sweden, 800 G Street SE, Washington, DC 20003, USA.
Tel +1 202 546 7575, ovsla.com

IN THE JANUARY ISSUE Designer and TV presenter Adam Frost.

"We forget that what OvS was doing in the 1970s was truly shocking to people. It was a very bold gesture – and people were attracted to that"





Pines and needles

A small nursery outside Herstmonceux in East Sussex provides a thrilling introduction to the varied world of conifers – and much more besides

WORDS NATASHA GOODFELLOW PHOTOGRAPHS RACHEL WARNE



An invitation to join a yoga class by the lake is not what you expect when visiting a plant nursery, but then Lime Cross Nursery, just outside Herstmonceux in East Sussex, has always done things a bit differently. In the 1940s Alan and Olive Tate moved from London and experimented with tobacco and pig farming, before settling on wallflowers. When business started to tail off 30 years later, their son, Jonathan, stepped in to help. This being the 1970s, the Leyland cypress was in its heyday, as were rockeries – the perfect place for a dwarf conifer – and Jonathan capitalised on the opportunity, converting the nursery to wholesale conifer production. “He became obsessed,” laughs his daughter Vicky. “For my sister Helen and me, all our earliest memories are of going to see conifers in gardens around the country, or of helping to tie his grafts. It was like a punishment.”

Jonathan had truly been bitten by the conifer bug, and determined to show his customers the sheer variety of form, habit and colour available. A dab hand at grafting, he collected material wherever he went, building his collection to almost 700 cultivars (of which around 400 are now regularly propagated) and successfully introducing new cultivars, such as *Pinus wallichiana* ‘Vicky’, which he spotted growing as a witches’ broom, or mutation, in Wakehurst Place, West Sussex.

With Derek Spicer of wholesale nursery Kilworth Conifers and Daniel Luscombe, dendrologist at the National Pinetum at Bedgebury, he co-founded the British Conifer Society and organised trips to and collaboration with other conifer societies around the world. In 1998, he started a pinetum of his own, still sought out by specialist groups today.

Sadly, not everyone shared his passion. Changing tastes – and a multitude of bad press over disputes caused by overgrown *Leylandii* – meant conifers were no longer in fashion, and the nursery moved from wholesale to retail.

Over the past 11 years both of Jonathan’s daughters, first Helen, then Vicky, have joined the business bringing renewed energy and enthusiasm – hence the yoga, not to mention wild swimming (in the lake dug by their father to conserve water and improve plant health), a Friday night pizza club and regular wine tastings. At one point, they even had ➤

Clockwise from top left

Lime Cross’s pinetum established by Helen and Vicky’s father Jonathan allows visitors to appreciate the vast range of foliage colour and textures available. Here *Pinus mugo* ‘Ophir’ is shown in the foreground with, from left, *Pinus flexilis* ‘Firmament’, *Abies lasiocarpa* ‘Green Globe’, *Taxus baccata* ‘Fastigiata’, with the weeping *Xanthocyparis nootkatensis* ‘Pendula’, behind.

Part of the dwarf/slow-growing sales area – there are also separate sales areas for medium- and tall/fast-growing conifers – close to the café named after Helen and Vicky’s grandmother Olive.

Helen transports a young fir tree to a customer. As well as a huge range of conifers Lime Cross also stocks several home-grown shrubs and olive trees.

▷ plans for a gin distillery and a bakery. “We want to change the energy of the place – to grow the spirit of the business, as well as the business itself,” says Helen.

What hasn’t changed is the focus on conifers which, to their delight, are now once more in the limelight. They still propagate around 2,500 trees a year – in 13 genera, from *Abies*, *Cedrus* and *Ginkgo* to *Larix*, *Picea* and *Pinus*. They exhibit at prestigious shows, such as Les Journées des Plantes and the (by invite-only) Great Dixter plant fairs, and sell to local people and private collectors as well as to public gardens at Bedgebury, Scotney Castle and Great Dixter. Specimens including *Cupressus cashmeriana*, *Pinus montezumae* ‘Sheffield Park’, *Podocarpus salignus* and *Araucaria araucana* (the monkey puzzle tree) are on display at RHS Garden Wisley, where curator Matthew Pottage has planted a new exotic garden. “People might think of conifers as alpine plants, but they grow all over world from Siberia to Chile, in temperatures from -40°C to 40°C,” says Vicky.

This diversity can be seen in the nursery display areas, but is best appreciated in the pinetum, just as Jonathan, who sadly died in 2014, had hoped. Here, giants such as metasequoias, *Abies procera* ‘Glauc’ and damp-loving, swamp cypresses are interspersed with all manner of rarities from *Picea abies* ‘Cruenta’, whose new spring growth is bright red, to *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* ‘Wissel’s Saguaro’ looking every bit like the cactus after which it is named. There are weeping forms, conical forms, prostrate forms and everything in between, in shades of white, gold, green and dusky blue.

“When people really appreciate the plants, we feel in awe of what our dad achieved,” says Helen. “We hope to be able to build on his collection, although we haven’t had the time to do so yet.” Perhaps the gin distillery will have to go on hold for a little longer. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Lime Cross Nursery, Herstmonceux, Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 4RS.

Tel 01323 833229.

Web limecross.co.uk

Open Every day, except Christmas Day, New Year’s Day and Easter Sunday, 9am-5pm.

Clockwise from top left

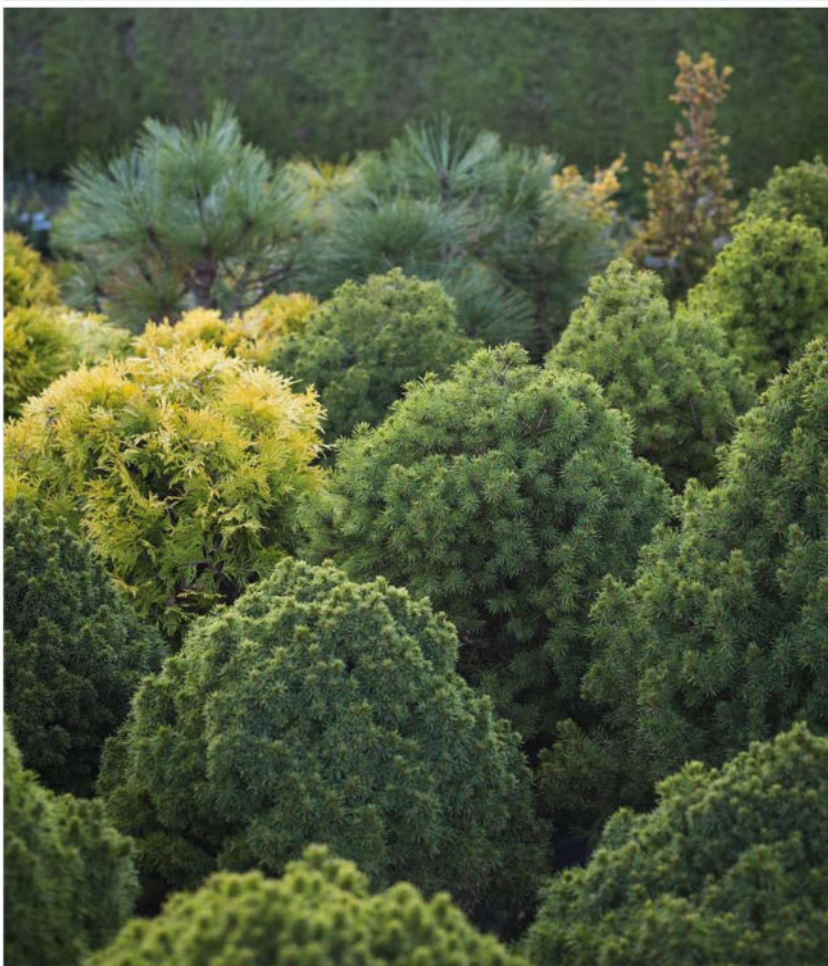
The dwarf/slow-growing conifer sales area leads to polytunnels where the sisters grow shrubs, ornamental trees and overwinter more tender conifers.

At the propagation bench, Vicky is hard at work grafting cuttings of a *Pinus sylvestris* ‘Beuvronensis’ for next year’s stock.

A selection of conifers ready for sale, including the golden *Thuja occidentalis* ‘Amber Glow’, along with *Pinus jeffreyi* ‘Joppi’, *Taxodium distichum* ‘Schloss Herten’ and *Picea glauca* var. *albertiana* ‘Alberta Globe’.

One of Helen’s favourite conifers, *Pinus strobus* ‘Sea Urchin’, which stays small and compact and is ideal for growing in a pot or a small garden.





Grafting conifers

Grafting for commercial purposes takes years of experience but that's not to say you can't be successful at home. For best results, keep your equipment clean and remember that aftercare is just as important as the graft, if not more so.



1 In winter, while the plants are dormant, select your scion material for cutting. Choose fresh, healthy growth about 10-15cm long and the thickness of your little finger. Cut with clean, sharp secateurs. Place in a plastic bag to conserve moisture if not grafting immediately.



2 Clean your understock or rootstock (these can be bought separately and are generally seed-raised plants of the same genus that are around two years old). Remove the lower branches to make space for the graft and cut back heavy top growth to minimise water loss.



3 Having selected a piece of your scion material, which is slightly thinner than the understock, use a grafting knife to expose the cambium (the ring of growth cells between the wood and the bark), leaving a flat, cut surface down the length of the stem about 2.5cm long.



4 Make a 'matching' cut on the understock and bring the two pieces together, positioning them so the cambium of the rootstock and scion are aligned.



5 Tie firmly with grafting tape. Water well and place the grafted plant under plastic sheeting to ensure it's kept humid. Check daily for temperature and ventilation until, in late spring, the graft becomes calloused and buds appear on the scion material.



12 of Helen and Vicky's favourite conifers

1 *Pinus contorta* 'Chief Joseph'

This pine is relatively hard to get hold of but well worth the effort – its deep green foliage transforms into a glowing beacon of yellow in the winter months.

2.5m. AGM*. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b†.

2 *Cedrus libani* 'Blue Angel'

A narrow, upright yet weeping cedar with a bluish tinge and beautiful cones formed in spring and held for most of the year. Likes a sunny spot if possible. 3.5m. USDA 6a-9b.

3 *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Nana Gracilis'

Slightly reminiscent of a flamenco dancer's ruffled skirts, this slow-growing tree is ideal for small gardens, and good in pots.

1m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.

4 *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Rein's Dense Jade'

A much denser, faster growing tree than 'Black Dragon' (see facing page) this has rich green foliage that takes on copper tints in the autumn. 4m. USDA 5a-8b.

5 *Podocarpus salignus*

Though unmistakably coniferous, from a distance the foliage of this slow-growing tree seems more leaf than needle, lending it an exotic look. Best in sun or dappled shade.

1.5m. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 8a-9b.



* Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. † Hardiness ratings given where available.



7



8

6 *Pinus strobus* 'Sea Urchin'

Living up to its name, this dwarf, slow-growing plant produces a small mound of spiky, glaucous foliage. Benefits from an occasional shake to remove dropped needles from its centre. 20cm. USDA 3a-8b.

7 *Cupressus arizonica* var. *glabra* 'Aurea'

The feathery foliage of this slim, conical cypress is golden in spring and fades to a pale green in winter. Easy to trim. 3m. USDA 5a-9b.



9



10

8 *Pinus wallichiana* 'Vicky'

Jonathan always said his elder daughter looked like a shaggy Shetland pony, a bit like this pine, hence its name. He discovered it as a witches' broom, or mutation, at nearby Wakehurst Place. 2.5m. USDA 5a-7b.

9 *Pinus patula*

A tall, conically shaped tree, its beauty lies in its long, weeping needles, which are particularly eye-catching when backlit. Slightly tender so better in the south of England, in a sheltered position. 6m. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 8a-10b.

10 *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Black Dragon'

This cryptomeria makes a good structural plant with an upright, conical shape and stiff branches that rear up at their tips. Prefers lime-free soil. 3m. USDA 5a-9b.



11



12

11 *Picea omorika* 'Pendula Bruns'

With their shaggy, twisted, seemingly gravity-defying habit, it's easy to fool yourself that these spruces are creeping around your garden. With a narrow silhouette they are good as specimen trees surrounded by perennial or meadow planting. Best in sun. 4m. USDA 5a-8b.

12 *Sciadopitys verticillata*

A very slow growing conical evergreen with whorls of umbrella-like needles and clusters of dark-brown, male pollen cones, seen here. Needs lime-free soil and a sheltered spot. 1.25m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.



Of light and land

Covered in Narnia-like winter frosts the Piet Oudolf-designed Millennium Garden at the heart of Pensthorpe Natural Park can stop visitors in their tracks

WORDS MATTHEW BIGGS PHOTOGRAPHS RICHARD BLOOM



In brief

Name Millennium Garden.

What A garden designed by Piet Oudolf that forms part of the 600-acre Pensthorpe Natural Park.

Where Fakenham, Norfolk.

Size One acre.

Climate Humid with short, dry summers and wet winters.

Soil Variable, from deep, sandy loam to free-draining gravel.

Hardiness rating USDA 9b.

Even in midwinter, the Millennium Garden with its curving paths winding through domes of perennials and grasses is a stunningly beautiful sight.



Clockwise from top left

***Aruncus* 'Horatio'** Branchlets of tiny, white flowers from early to midsummer age to red. Stunning covered in hoar frost. 1.2m. RHS H6, USDA 4a-7b^{*}.

***Persicaria x fennica* 'Johanniswolke'** Vigorous and beautiful but it can overwhelm. The large panicles of cream flowers turn pink, then brown-red, creating interest over several seasons. 2m. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

Doellingeria umbellata Resistance to powdery mildew makes this an invaluable aster. In midwinter its stiff, slender stems are topped by fluffy seedheads. 1.5m. USDA 3a-8b.

***Molinia caerulea* subsp. *caerulea* 'Poul Petersen'** Forms robust tidy clumps of elegant, green leaves from which the light, airy flower stems appear. Planted en mass, they form a dainty display in winter. 90cm. USDA 4a-9b.



^{*}Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. ^{*}Hardiness ratings given where available.

W

e bought Pensthorpe thinking we were buying a nature reserve,” says Deb Jordan. “When we discovered it included a Piet Oudolf garden, it was like finding a Monet under the floorboards.”

Pensthorpe’s original owner, Bill Makins, had commissioned the Dutch designer early in his career – it was in fact Piet’s first public garden in Britain. His brief included instructions to keep the beautiful views and to create a garden that visitors should discover as a pleasant surprise and that looked its best from midsummer until mid October. The concept of retaining herbaceous plants and grasses for their winter beauty was little considered at the time.

In 2008, when the Jordans bought the nature reserve, they invited Piet back to refresh the garden. Over the intervening period Piet’s ideas on planting and colour had evolved and changes were made. Dominant species, such as *Pericaria x fennica* ‘Johanniswolke’, were more rigorously controlled, self seeders, such as *Rudbeckia maxima*, removed and splashes of bright-yellow *Solidago* and *Inula magnifica* ‘Sonnenstrahl’ added to the scheme.

Autumn begins when the first petals fall from *Pericaria amplexicaulis* ‘Firedance’, as if prompting the rest of the plants into

elegant decline. The quality of the display is reflected in the plants that have been chosen. Grasses such as *Miscanthus* and *Panicum*, have proved to be reliable whatever the conditions but prolonged wind and rain flattens plants, such as *Molinia caerulea* subsp. *arundinacea* ‘Transparent’ and *Salvia verticillata* ‘Purple Rain’.

“We tried tidying them up to make the garden more presentable, but the tidy areas looked too formal so we now leave nature free to express herself and accept what we are given,” says head gardener Jonathan Pearce.

The garden is transformed by the first frosts of November. The sinuous paths and rolling contours of the garden borrow the surrounding landscape of the lake and the dark tracery of the leafless trees beyond, creating a wider panorama. “It is a bit like being in Narnia when the stems are rimed with frost and festooned in spider webs,” says Deb. “On some days, it is so still it can be quite eerie, on other days there is the gentle sound of the wind whispering through the grasses. It is a garden of ever changing moods.” The low winter sun and changing light influence the atmosphere in the garden too. On gloomy grey ▷



Lit by a low winter sun, grasses and seedheads show off their form to great effect. The tall, fluffy seedheads of *Eupatorium atropurpureum* on the left look especially striking.



In winter, the straight lines of the gazebo are a perfect counterpoint to the surrounding stems and billowing seedheads, particularly the bronze of *Astilbe chinensis* var. *taquetii* 'Purpurlanze'.

▷ days, when the mist sits in the valley, the oak leaves fall creating a pool of gold and bronze and the grass *Sporobolus heterolepis* shines out with a warm golden glow, the garden is really eye-catching. "The best time to see the garden is early winter, early in the morning as the sun is rising over the lakes, beaming its soft light into the garden. To witness that moment is breathtaking," says Jonathan.

An overview shows much of the planting as a tinted patchwork of subtle parchment tones, from the bold clumps of grasses and pale, feathery seedheads, contrasting colours are provided by the black of *Actaea simplex* 'James Compton' brown *Pericaria alpina* and the deep-bronze stems of *Echinacea*. Walking through the garden the shape, form and fine detail of individual seedheads is revealed, from soft, feathery plumes to abstract alien sculptures.

The display remains until early March. At the first signs of spring growth, usually from the *Miscanthus*, cutting back begins. Stems are reduced in 30cm sections to ground level with the hedge trimmer and the few plants that still look untidy, such

as *Symphiotrichum lateriflorum* var. *horizontalis* and *Pericaria alpina*, are tidied further with a lawnmower, the whole process taking about two weeks. Debris is then left on the beds to decompose and the cycle of growth begins again.

"The garden mesmerises visitors, especially in winter. Many have never experienced anything like this before. I have seen people stop in their tracks and gasp at the unexpected beauty," says Deb. It is that kind of garden. □

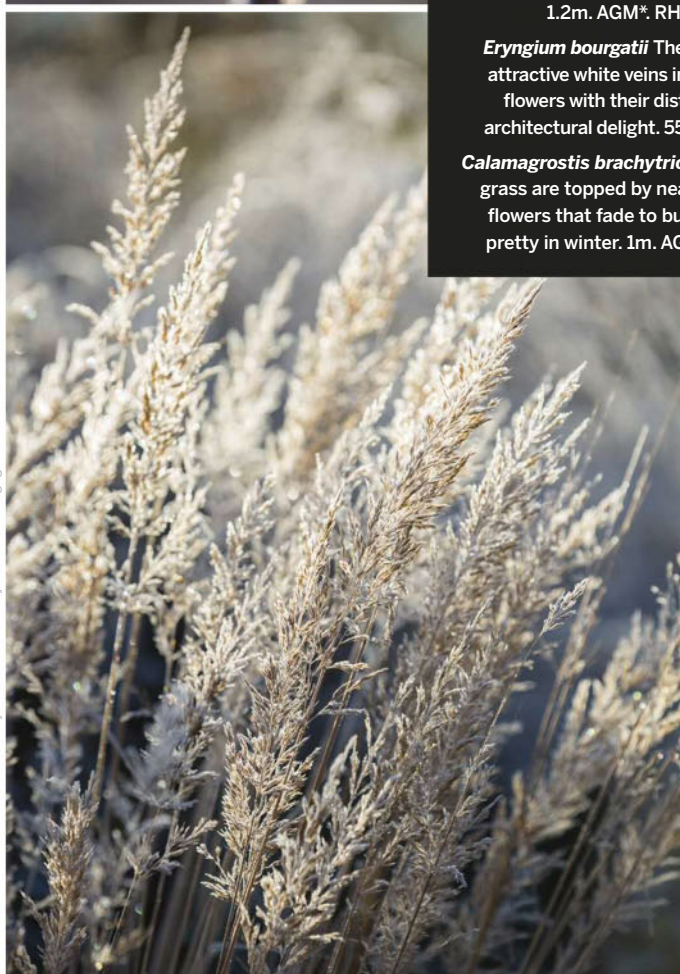
USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Pensthorpe Natural Park, Fakenham Road, Fakenham, Norfolk NR21 0LN.

Tel 01328 851465.

Web pensthorpe.com

Open Every day, except 24-26 December, 10am to dusk (closes at 5pm, September to December). Admission £11.95.



Clockwise from top left

***Echinacea purpurea* 'Rubinglow'** Purple flower heads gradually disintegrate over the winter as nature sculpts her art work. 70cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

***Astilbe chinensis* var. *taquetii* 'Purpurlanze'** Normally associated with damp soil, its purple flowers are more intense in dry conditions. The long-lasting seedheads create useful punctuation points in a winter border. 1.2m. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

Eryngium bourgatii The grey-green leaves display attractive white veins in summer; in winter faded flowers with their distinctive spiky ruff are an architectural delight. 55cm. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

Calamagrostis brachytricha Stems of this distinctive grass are topped by neat plumes of purple-tinted flowers that fade to buff and beige and are very pretty in winter. 1m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.



Evergreen hollies

Slow-growing hollies are versatile shrubs that are perfect for a small garden and offer interest all year – not just at Christmas

WORDS ANDY McINDOE

In brief

What Shrubs and small trees grown for their ornamental, evergreen foliage.

Origin Europe, Asia and North America. Many cultivars with variegated leaves are of garden origin.

Season Foliage has year-round appeal, although hollies come into their own in winter when female plants bear fruit.

Size Variable in size from compact shrubs, such as *Ilex crenata*, with a height and spread of 90cm, to small trees over 6m high.

Conditions They grow on most, reasonably moist but well-drained soils in sun or partial shade.



JULIAN WINSLOW

Andy McIndoe is a horticulturist and author with a special interest in trees and shrubs. He has been responsible for 25 gold medal-winning exhibits at RHS Chelsea Flower Shows.

A mature holly, shining in the winter sunshine is a wonderful sight. However, a fine specimen needs patience; hollies are long-lived shrubs that are going to take their time to reach maturity, regardless of your efforts as a gardener. Most are rangy juveniles with little appeal sitting on the bench in a garden centre. Given a good upbringing they grow into elegant, slim young trees, becoming broader and more important with age. Sadly, their determination to do things in their own time has led to their exclusion from some gardens. In our haste to see quick results hollies are often dismissed as too slow. However, for those prepared to plant for the future, these are some of the most rewarding evergreens in cultivation.

My early experiences of holly did not endear me to the plant. I could never see the appeal of draping the plates and pictures on the wall with sprays of evergreen with a few berries, and I remember the agony of making holly wreaths, when I worked for a florist as a boy. Others seemed more hardened to the spines and stub wires than me with my soft, schoolboy fingers.

When I started selling plants I soon experienced the fun botanists have had with the nomenclature. If it is a female, and therefore produces the desired red berries on cue for Christmas, it probably has a male name. The first I learned was probably the one that virtually everyone knows: *I. x altaclerensis* 'Golden King', with its broad, gold-variegated leaves and clusters of large, red-brown berries. Feminine sounding cultivars are usually male. There are exceptions. *I. aquifolium* 'Silver Milkmaid' is female ('Silver Milkboy' is also female, just to add to the confusion).

Hollies are mostly dioecious, in other words male and female flowers are produced on separate plants. Males outnumber females by as much as 18 to one. So, if you want a common holly with berries, ►

Ilex aquifolium 'Madame Briot'

A female holly with purple stems and gently waved, spiny, green leaves, mottled and edged with bright yellow. Scarlet fruits appear near the ends of the branches in winter. A popular variegated cultivar forming an elegant, conical, small tree when allowed to grow as a specimen. 6m. AGM*. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b†.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.

†Hardiness ratings given where available.

▷ planting a young specimen of the species is a lottery. Luckily, there are hermaphrodite, self-fertile cultivars that set a good crop of fruit without the need for a pollinator. The best known is *I. aquifolium* 'JC van Tol', a holly I came across early in my career and one I always confidently recommend.

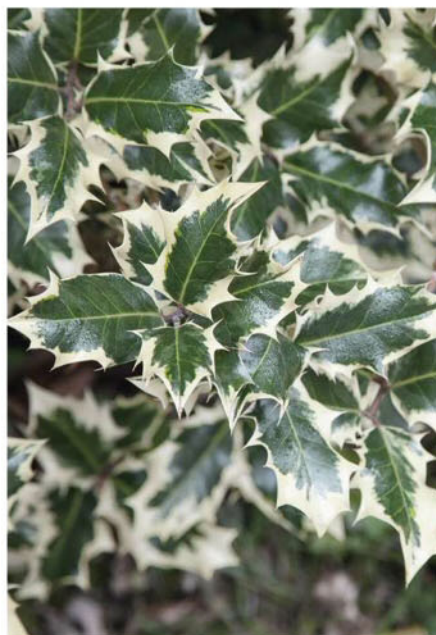
In recent years, with the interest in encouraging wildlife and use of native plants holly has enjoyed some renewed interest. Although the flowers of common holly, *I. aquifolium*, are insignificant they are a valuable source of nectar and pollen for bees and insects. The winter berries are soon devoured by wild birds as soon as they ripen, usually just before it is time to gather it for indoor decoration. The presence of holly in a mixed native hedge not only adds evergreen interest but provides a valuable protected roosting and nesting site for wild birds.

As gardens get smaller there is greater demand for plants that not only provide year-round interest, but can also be controlled in size. Some make attractive standards, suitable to add the presence of a small tree in a courtyard or garden, or as an alternative to a bay tree in a container. The white and green variegated *I. aquifolium* 'Argentea Marginata' is stunning grown in this way.

Although hollies are at their best in an open, sunny position on good soil they are remarkably tolerant and their shining, glossy leaves can light up a shady corner. They are tough and wind resistant and survive urban pollution and salt-laden sea air. They make wonderful foundation shrubs for the back of a border, where they can take on the starring role when perennials disappear and deciduous shrubs stand naked in winter. Try a golden-variegated holly behind a group of *Cornus sanguinea* 'Midwinter Fire', underplanted with the large-leaved *Hedera colchica* 'Sulphur Heart'. Or the compact *I. aquifolium* 'Ferox Argentea' with the white-and-green variegated *Cornus alba* 'Sibirica Variegata'; a striking combination through summer and in winter when the dogwood's dark-red stems are revealed.

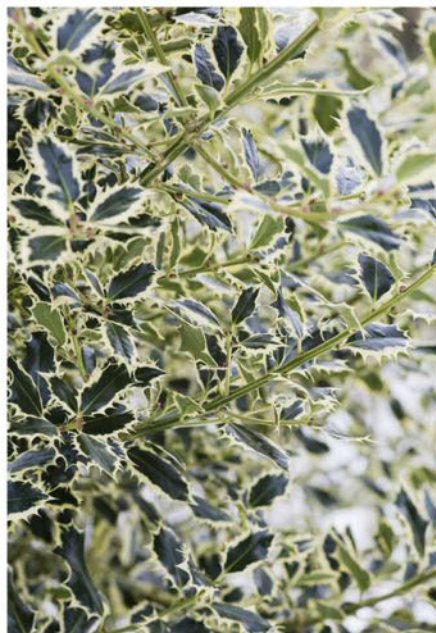
Never overpowering, but with maturity and presence, hollies show their worth in many planting combinations.

• Andy's recommendations for evergreen hollies continue over the next six pages.



***Ilex aquifolium* 'Silver Queen'**

A superb male holly with dark-green leaves bordered with creamy-white. New leaves unfurl salmon pink at the tips of the shoots. Good standalone specimen or to lighten dark evergreens. 6m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.



***I. aquifolium* 'Elegantissima'**

A male holly with spiny, dark-green leaves with bold, creamy-white edges. New growth at the tips of the shoots is flushed with pink. A good choice for a shady border grown with *Choisya ternata*. 6m. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.



***I. aquifolium* 'Silver Milkmaid'**

A female that, in the presence of a pollinator, produces a good crop of red berries in winter. The reverse of most variegations it offers a more subtle alternative and works well with other evergreens. 6m. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.



***I. aquifolium* 'Silver van Tol'**

A variegated form of a popular, self-fertile holly that produces masses of red berries. Compact with upright shoots and almost spineless, cream-edged leaves. Good choice for a small garden. 4m. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.

THE GARDEN COLLECTOR / NOVIA PHOTOGRAPHY / CAROLE DRAKE / GAP PHOTOS. LOCATON: THE S/HAROLD HILLER GARDENS/HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL; GARDEN WORLD IMAGES LTD. / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO. VICTORIA FIRMSTON / GAP PHOTOS



***I. aquifolium* 'Ferox Argentea'**

A male, bushy shrub with lax growth and purple young shoots. The dark-green leaves with white margins are puckered and spiny around the edge. Good under tall, deciduous trees. 3m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.



***I. x altaclerensis* 'Belgica Aurea'**

One of the finest variegated hollies. Upright in habit, with ascending shoots, it has large, flat, oval, virtually spineless leaves. A female clone, it produces a modest crop of red berries in winter. 8m. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.



***I. aquifolium* 'Argentea Marginata'**

A female cultivar producing abundant, shining red berries in winter. New growth is tinged with pink. Grow with 'Elegantissima' as a pollinator to maintain the same foliage effect. 6m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.



***I. crenata* 'Shiro-fukurin'**

A female Japanese holly that often produces a few small, black fruits. Forms a dense, upright shrub with neat, oval, dark-green leaves finely edged with white. Slow growing, so ideal for small gardens. 3m. RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.



***I. aquifolium* 'Handsworth New Silver'**

Growth of this popular, female holly is upright and its dark-green leaves, edged with creamy white, are well-spaced when young. Produces a good crop of bead-like, bright-red berries in winter. 6m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.



***I. x altaclerensis* 'Howick'**

A vigorous, female holly with rounded, matt-green leaves edged with creamy white. A good companion for other big, bold evergreens, such as *Prunus lusitanica* or *Viburnum tinus*. 8m. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.



I. x altaclerensis 'Golden King'

One of the showiest variegated hollies and deservedly one of the most popular. Broad, flat, almost spineless, green leaves are broadly edged with gold. The clusters of red-brown berries are displayed beautifully against the bright foliage in winter. Given space it makes an attractive, small, conical tree. 6m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.



***I. aquifolium* 'Myrtifolia Aurea Maculata'**

A bushy, male holly with dark young stems. Smaller in stature than most cultivars, it's good for smaller gardens. Good in shade with *Choisya ternata* Sundance (= 'Lich'). 3m. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.



***I. x altacrerensis* 'Lawsoniana'**

Leaves are green but boldly splashed with pale green and gold in the centre. A female cultivar with red-brown fruits and a good planting partner for shrubs with golden foliage. 6m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.



***I. aquifolium* 'Golden Queen'**

Male holly with broad, spiny, deep-green leaves, broadly edged with soft gold – sometimes almost entirely gold. A good choice to brighten a shady corner. 6m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.



***I. crenata* 'Golden Gem'**

A compact Japanese holly with small, yellow leaves, at their brightest in winter and spring. Ideal for small gardens. Female, but both flowers and fruit are insignificant. 60cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.

Cultivation

Evergreen hollies are easy to grow, succeeding on most soils. They dislike waterlogged conditions and heavy clay, but need some soil moisture to thrive, so are rarely at their best on dry, chalk soils and seem to prefer neutral to acid conditions. Best planted as young, container-grown plants at any time of year, although ideally in autumn or early spring. Occasionally, *Ilex aquifolium*, if used for hedging, is planted as small, bare-root plants.

Hollies grow in sun or part-shade and are useful subjects to plant under the light shade of deciduous trees. They can be grown as long-term shrubs for pots and containers, if planted in loam-based growing medium. Remember to feed annually with a slow-release fertiliser and water regularly. Their hardy constitution means they are suitable for open, exposed situations and most can tolerate coastal air.

The evergreen types are versatile shrubs, which respond well to pruning and clipping, most making excellent subjects for hedging, topiary and training as standards. Hedges and topiary are usually clipped in late summer. Old, untrained plants can become straggly with long trailing shoots with a few leaves near the tips. These can be successfully rejuvenated by cutting back hard in spring.

Variegated hollies occasionally produce plain-green shoots, known as reversion. This growth should be cut out as soon as possible. It is more vigorous than the variegated plant, so can soon take over. Like all evergreens, hollies shed old leaves in summer. This is especially noticeable if the weather is hot and dry and leaf drop is sudden. Rarely cause for concern, this is merely part of the growing cycle.

Hollies in folklore

Ancient man was in awe of this incredible plant that defied the elements. When the world was frozen and deciduous trees and shrubs nothing more than bare branches,

holly shone, not only retaining its glossy leaves but also producing scarlet fruits. The red berries were reputedly able to ward off evil spirits, so holly trees were planted by cottage doorways. Throughout Europe hollies have been planted close to houses to deter lightning strikes as holly was associated with the thunder gods. Science has proved that the spines of holly leaves can act as tiny lightning conductors, so there is some foundation for their use.

People also believed witches crossed the countryside along the top of hedgerows, so to block their passage, hollies were allowed to grow above the hedge line.

Although it has always been considered very bad luck to chop down a holly tree, branches could be cut for seasonal ritual and practical purposes. Placed around animal pens, they were used to protect livestock.

Where to see and buy

- **BlueBell Arboretum & Nursery**

Annwell Lane, Smisby, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire LE65 2TA.
Tel 01530 413700,
bluebellnursery.com

- **Highfield Hollies**

Highfield Farm, Hatch Lane, Liss, Hampshire GU33 7NH.
Tel 01730 892372, abtek-it.co.uk
No longer operates as a nursery, but welcomes visits by appointment.

- **Penwood Nurseries**

The Drove, Penwood, Newbury, Berkshire RG20 9EW.
Tel 01635 254366,
penwoodnurseries.co.uk

- **RHS Garden Rosemoor**

Torrington, Devon EX38 8PH.
Tel 01805 624067,
rhs.org.uk/gardens/rosemoor
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- **The Sir Harold Hillier Gardens**

Jermyns Lane, Ampfield, Romsey, Hampshire SO51 0QA.
hants.gov.uk/hilliergardens

- **Welsh Holly**

Tenby Road, St Clears, Carmarthen, Carmarthenshire SA33 2JP.
Tel 01994 231789, welsh-holly.co.uk



I. x altaclerensis 'Camelliifolia'

A vigorous cultivar, that can grow into a substantial tree with purple-tinged new growth. Large, red berries appear in winter, well displayed against the mostly spineless leaves. 10m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.



I. colchica

This medium-sized shrub has slender, emerald-green leaves with few, pointed spines. The foliage can take on purple tints in winter. There are both male and female plants. 3m. RHS H6, USDA 6a-11.



I. aquifolium 'Ferox'

Reputedly the oldest holly in cultivation and grown since the early 17th century. Small and bushy with spiny, dark-green leaves, it's a male, so does not fruit, but makes an attractive hedge. 3m. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.



I. x aquipernyi Dragon Lady (= 'Meschick')

A hybrid holly growing to form a perfect obelisk of spiny, olive-green leaves and abundant red fruits. An excellent evergreen shrub, it was raised by Kathleen Meserve in the USA. 5m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.

GARDEN WORLD IMAGES LTD / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; SUSIE MCCAFFREY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; REX MAY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; CAROLE DRAKE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



***I. cornuta* 'Burfordii'**

A dense, bushy shrub with leathery and shiny, deep-green leaves. It produces a good crop of red berries without a pollinator and is a popular subject for hedging in parts of the USA. 4m. RHS H6, USDA 7a-9b.



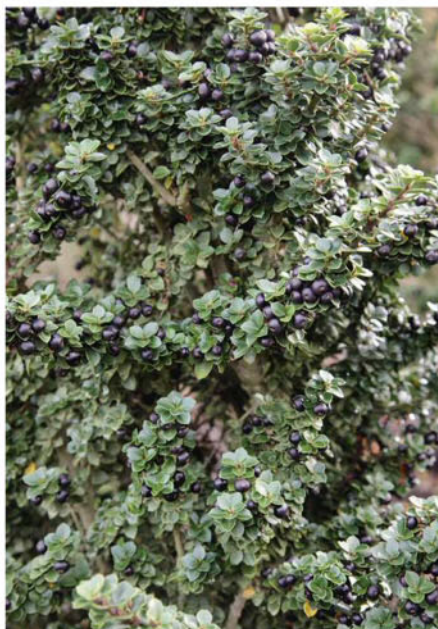
***I. x meserveae* Blue Angel (= 'Conang')**

A dense, holly with small, dark-green leaves that have a bluish sheen and bead-like, bright-red berries. Upright in habit and extremely hardy, it is ideal for small gardens and colder areas. 1.8m. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.



***I. x altaclerensis* 'Wilsonii'**

A compact, female shrub, rounded in habit, with large, broad, veined leaves with some spines. Ideal to train as a standard with a compact, evergreen head. Bears a good crop of scarlet berries. 6m. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.



***I. crenata* 'Dwarf Pagoda'**

A dwarf, Japanese holly with tiny, round, evergreen leaves and a twisted and congested growth habit. Perfect for small gardens and containers. Flowers in spring are followed by black berries. 1.2m. RHS H6, USDA 6a-8b.



***I. x koehneana* 'Chestnut Leaf'**

A large, fast-growing shrub that can be trained as a standard tree. Glossy, leathery, olive-green leaves with short spines along the margins. Female, it bears clusters of red fruits in winter. 6m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 7a-9b.



I. pernyi

A slow-growing holly with small, almost triangular, boldly spined leaves carried on straight twigs, giving the whole plant a stiff, angular appearance. Bright-red berries in autumn. 3m. RHS H6, USDA 7b-10b.

Ahead of the curve

Crafted from the timber of 150-year-old oaks, Gaze Burvill's furniture celebrates tradition, but it is made using cutting-edge technology

WORDS DOMINIQUE CORLETT PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Simon Burvill, with a garden seat from the Gaze Burvill Broadwalk collection, made from oak timber grown in the French Pyrenees.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

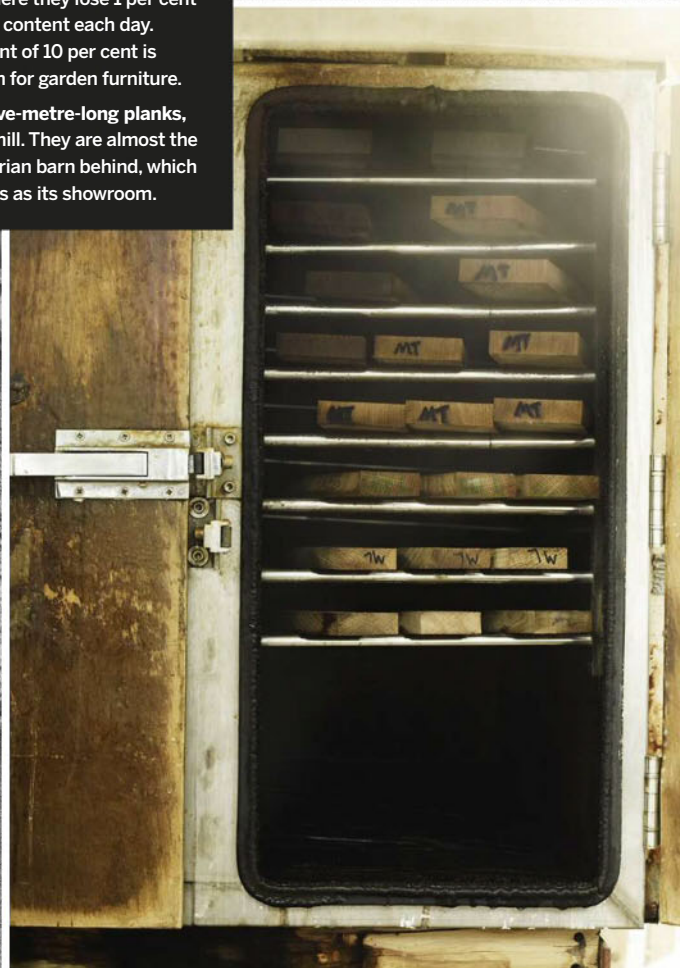
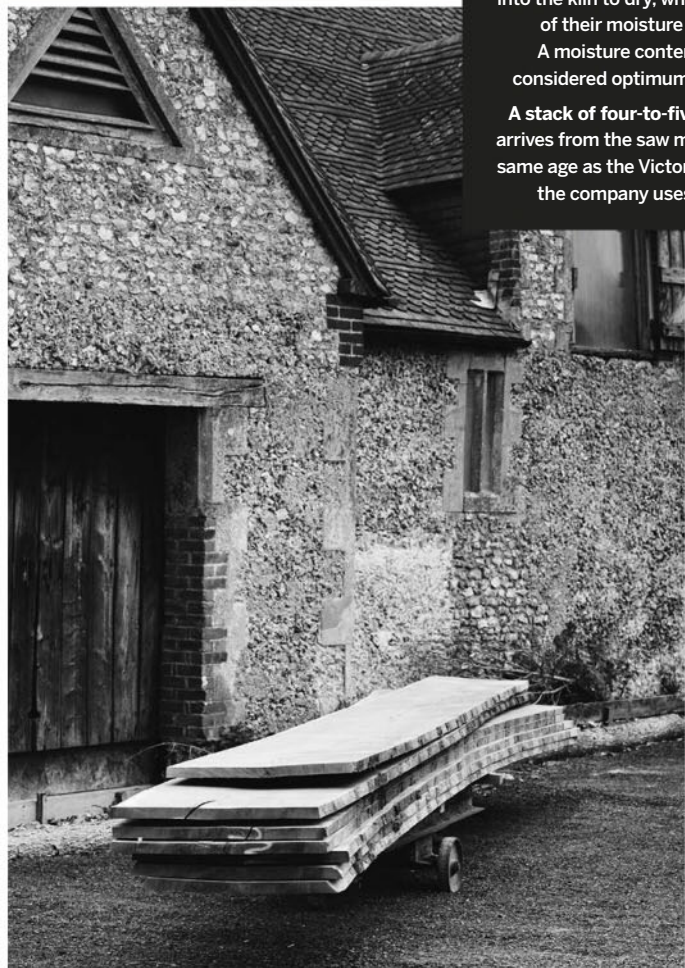
Spacer jigs are used to ensure the correct spacing between each seat slat.

A sculptural spiral bench, designed to encircle a planter or the trunk of a tree.

After steam bending, planks are placed into the kiln to dry, where they lose 1 per cent of their moisture content each day.

A moisture content of 10 per cent is considered optimum for garden furniture.

A stack of four-to-five-metre-long planks, arrives from the saw mill. They are almost the same age as the Victorian barn behind, which the company uses as its showroom.



Where curves are required, planks are steam bent, a process that involves heating them in a box to 100°C, giving the craftsman 30 seconds to bend them into a new shape

Simon Burvill, managing director of garden furniture company Gaze Burvill, and I are standing outside the company workshop, contemplating the life of an oak tree. Beside us sits a pile of enormous oak boards, the raw material from which the furniture is made. Unlike wild oak, the oak from which these boards were made were nurtured under strict conditions: planted at careful intervals; protected from animals; shorn of their lower branches; and thinned out over decades, to give the strongest ones the space to reach for the sky. By the time they were felled they were aged between 120 and 150 years. “For trees that produce this fine timber it can be six or seven metres, before you get to a branch,” says Simon, running a hand along the grain. “It still makes the hairs on the back of my neck stand up.”

Over the past 25 years the company Simon founded in 1992 with furniture designer Christian Gaze, has grown to employ 35 people and produce much-admired, award-winning furniture that graces some of the country’s finest gardens from Stourhead to Eaton Square. In the summer of 2016 the Queen was photographed sitting on one of the company’s benches for the cover of *Vanity Fair*. But Gaze Burvill’s success has not distracted Simon, a founding member of the Woodland Heritage charity, from his passion for timber and forestry. He runs the company in line with these values sourcing wood from sustainably managed forests in the French Pyrenees as well as Belgium and the UK, using the wood waste (including the sawdust) to heat the buildings through a biomass boiler; and keeping woodworking skills alive, by running a three-year apprenticeship scheme.

A peek inside the workshop reveals how the boards, which come from the strong impermeable heartwood of the tree, are turned into a piece of garden furniture. First trimmed into smaller planks, they are cut into the rough shapes of arms, legs, seat backs and supports, then smoothed and refined on a range of woodworking machines. Where curves are required, planks are steam bent, a traditional process that involves heating them in a box to 100°C, which melts the cellulose, giving the craftsman 30 seconds to bend them into a new shape. They are then clamped, and dried in the kiln, making the transformation permanent. The furniture – and since 2013 a range of outdoor kitchens – is hand built from the parts and finally treated with ammonia, an old cabinet-maker’s trick that seals and darkens the wood.

Gaze Burvill has built its reputation on these tried-and-tested methods, but it is not a place where Simon intends to rest. “Sometimes it irks me when people say we are a traditional garden furniture company,” he says. “We are known for innovating. We want to be pushing boundaries.” To this end the workshop now includes two computerised woodworking machines, that can do the jobs of all the traditional machines in one place. The newest machine, has also introduced exciting design possibilities. “Because the head can rotate, we can change the angle of a curve.” This allows them to produce parts in a twisting shape, something that could not previously have been achieved. It is an innovation the company has used in its two latest designs, Reedback and Levity, and is something Simon is pushing further in a new project to create 20 benches for RHS Garden Wisley’s woodland walk – a design that will eventually be on general sale.

“I’m impressed by the way chestnut trees at Wisley twist as they grow, and we are incorporating that into the design. We are extending our limits to make this piece, and we are learning in the process. I’m excited to weave in what we’ve learned and at the same time tell the story of forestry. That makes it a real Gaze Burvill project.” □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Gaze Burvill, Lodge Farm, East Tisted, Hampshire GU34 3QH. Tel 01420 588444, gazeburvill.com



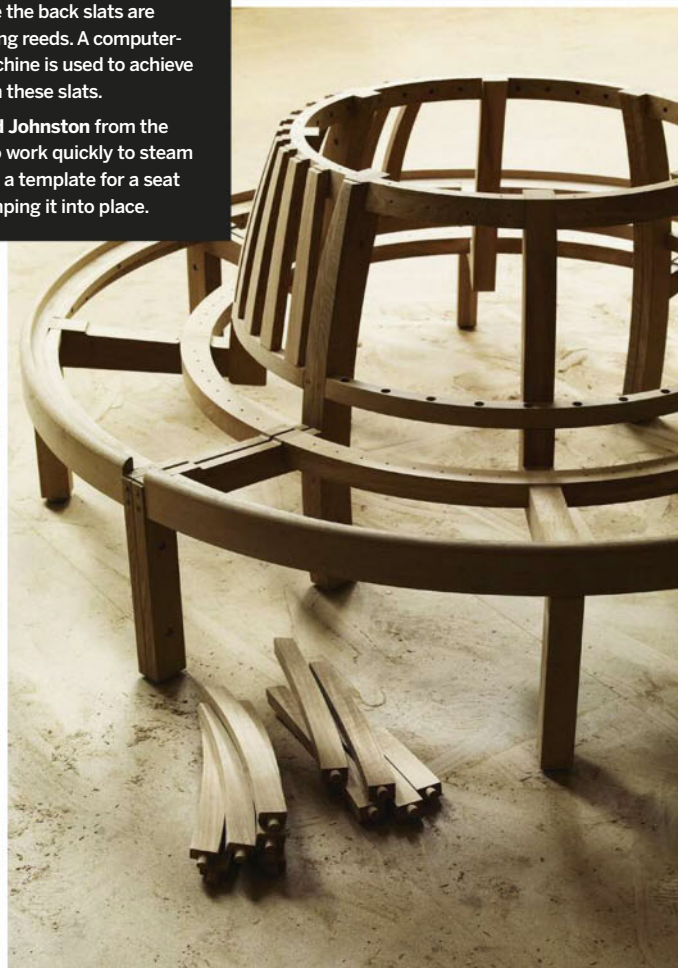
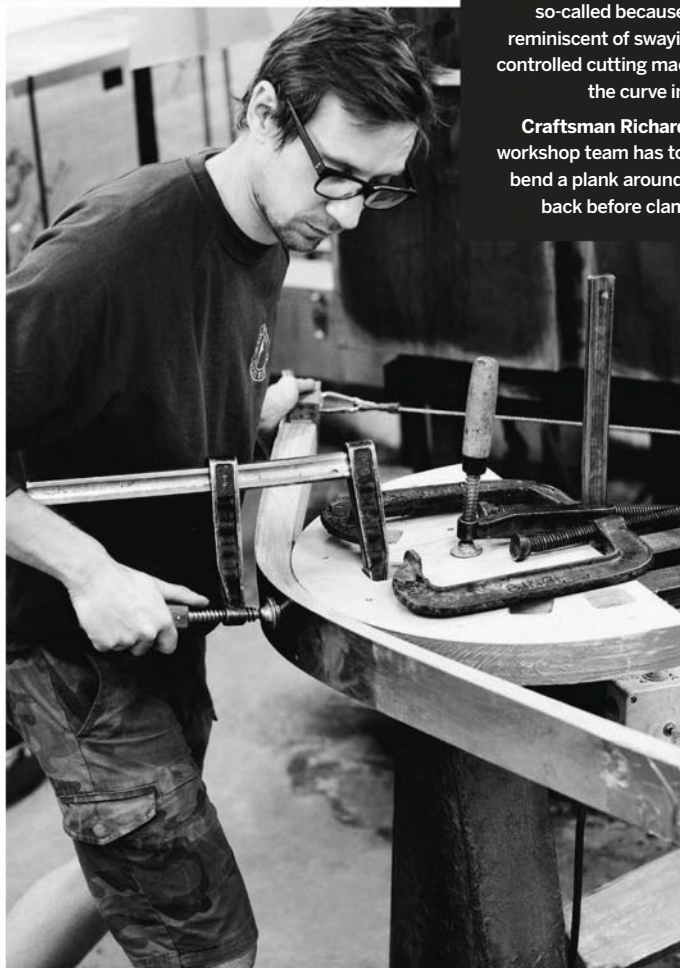
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Steam bending straps, such as these, are used on the back of a plank during bending, and help to prevent the wood from cracking.

This May Throne maquette demonstrates the company's construction techniques to clients.

A part-built Reedback tree seat, so-called because the back slats are reminiscent of swaying reeds. A computer-controlled cutting machine is used to achieve the curve in these slats.

Craftsman Richard Johnston from the workshop team has to work quickly to steam bend a plank around a template for a seat back before clamping it into place.



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John Piper Harbour Scene, Newhaven 1936-1937 © The Piper Estate / DACS 2017. Image courtesy: Private Collection.

design

Design update, ideas and sourcebook

UPDATE COMPILED BY ANNIE GATTI



POP-UP PARK

Breath of fresh air

Galvanised steel drainage pipes filled with plants, such as hebes, ivies and ferns, are helping to green up part of London's Barbican Estate. Conceived by a trio of young landscape architects at Studio xmpl, the planters, which line part of Moor Lane, are filled with a mixture of species that have been shown

to be effective in trapping particulates and improving air quality. The eye-catching pop-up park is part of the City of London's Low Emission Neighbourhood project and is expected to be in place for three to five years. It's managed by the City Gardens Team and Friends of City Gardens. xmpl.co.uk



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ECO PARKS

East for Eden

Grimshaw Architects, the practice behind the Rainforest and Mediterranean Biomes at Cornwall's Eden Project, has designed two of three new Eden projects planned for China. On the eastern coast, Eden Qingdao, with landscaping by LDA Design, will explore the theme of water and its importance for life on earth, while a second project (shown below) has been proposed for degraded land outside the city of Yan'an, which will focus on land and soil. Here connected biomes, some submerged, will reveal the science of soil.



RETREAT

Cabin fever

How about this as a place to get away from it all? It's been designed by David Thulstrup for Danish homeware company Vipp, as a prototype for a prefabricated retreat. Elevated above the ground on steel piers, the steel-framed cabin has sliding glass walls so you can experience nature at close quarters. The sleeping platforms, which sleep two, have a glass roof so you can lie and look up at the stars. The cabin is located in forest on the shores of Lake Immeln in southern Sweden. vipp.com



ASLA AWARD

Steel works

A design by Andrea Cochran Landscape Architecture for a private garden in Detroit has won this year's American Society of Landscape Architects Award of Excellence for Residential Design. Known as the Birmingham Residence, the garden features Corten steel used both in practical retaining walls and abstract sculptural screens (left), to celebrate the region's ties to the steel industry, while lush hedges and swathes of native *Schizachyrium scoparium* grass soften the concrete frame of the building. acochran.com

RESTORATION

Fit for a queen

The gardens at Hillsborough Castle, the Queen's official residence in Northern Ireland, are being redeveloped as part of a £16 million redevelopment project. Plans include the restoration of the Walled Garden based on plans from 1770, which will become a hub for horticultural training, and an overgrown fern valley, originally thought to have been planted as a William Robinson-style Wild Garden. hrp.org.uk



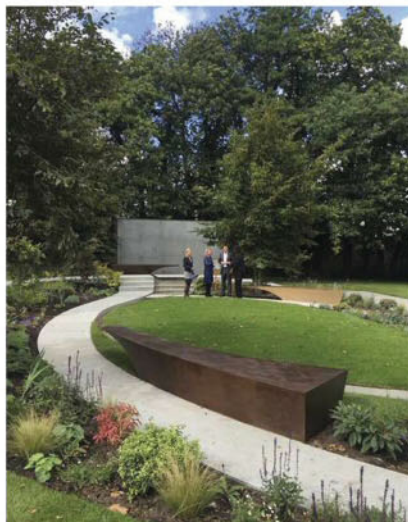
NUMBERS UP

The clean lines of these Croft door numbers from Rowen & Wren will make an elegant addition to any front door. Available in matt or bright nickel, brass and blackened bronze, they come with co-ordinating fittings. From £9, rowenandwren.co.uk

NEW GARDEN

Military salute

Jo Thompson's Chelsea Barracks Garden, for the 2016 RHS Chelsea Flower Show, has found a permanent home at the new British Legion Industries Centenary Village in Aylesford, Kent, where 24 flats have been built to accommodate injured veterans. The garden – a traditional rose garden re-imagined for the 21st century – is set centrally between the two blocks of flats with a backdrop of trees. Two veterans, who have received horticultural training funded by the Chelsea Barracks Foundation, will be in charge of maintaining the garden. rbli.co.uk



Notebook

- Learn how to use the key elements of colour, shape and texture in the border on the one-day **Planning and Planting Borders** course at Cotswold Gardening School. 2 December, 10am-4pm. £95. Gossington Hall, Gossington, Gloucestershire GL2 7DN. Tel 01453 899018, cotswoldgardeningsschool.co.uk
- Get inspiration for creating winter interest on a two-hour, guided **Garden Walk** around RHS Garden Harlow Carr. 7 December, 10am-12pm, £34, includes potted holly to take home. Crag Lane, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG3 1QB. Tel 01423 565418, rhs.org.uk/gardens/harlow-carr
- Book now for Palmstead Nurseries' tenth annual Soft Landscape Workshop for professional garden designers, landscape architects, landscape contractors and green space managers. This year's subject, **Taking Gardens and Landscapes to a Whole New Level**, will explore the hot topic of vertical forests and other skyward-bound green spaces. Speakers include Dan Pearson and Laura Gatti, co-designer of Milan's Bosco Verticale. 24 January 2018, £39. Ashford International Hotel, Simone Weil Avenue, Ashford, Kent TN24 8UX. Tel 01233 813340, palmstead.co.uk
- The English Gardening School's annual **Garden Makers Day** takes place on 18 January 2018. It's a full day of stimulating talks from designer Jinny Blom, plantsman Roy Lancaster and Aaron Bertelsen, Great Dixter's vegetable gardener and cook. £105, proceeds go to the Great Dixter Charitable Trust. Chelsea Physic Garden, 6 Royal Hospital Road, London SW3 4HS. Tel 020 7352 4347, englishgardening-school.co.uk

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2018: 3 May, 24 May, 14 June, 13 Sep
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2018: 16 May, 6 June, 27 June, 12 Sep
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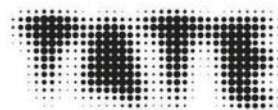
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Amedeo Modigliani Nude 1917 (detail). Private Collection

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1 French dressing

This is pretty darn lush. It's the 16th-century Château de Villandry in the Loire Valley that was once home to Napoleon Bonaparte's brother Jérôme, but the garden is relatively modern. It was made by a Spanish doctor, Joachim Carvallo, who with his wife Ann Coleman bought the château in 1906. The gardens offer far more than just this famous potager with Renaissance gardens, water gardens and magnificent flower gardens. It is still owned and run by the Carvallo family.



1. LUZEDDISON / FLORA PRESS



James Alexander-Sinclair is a garden designer, writer, broadcaster and founder of into-gardens.com. He has served on the RHS Council for the past five years.

Potagers

When is a vegetable garden not a vegetable garden? When it's a potager of course. But does the distinction come down to anything more than pretension or French good taste?

WORDS JAMES ALEXANDER-SINCLAIR



2

2 Old-style charm

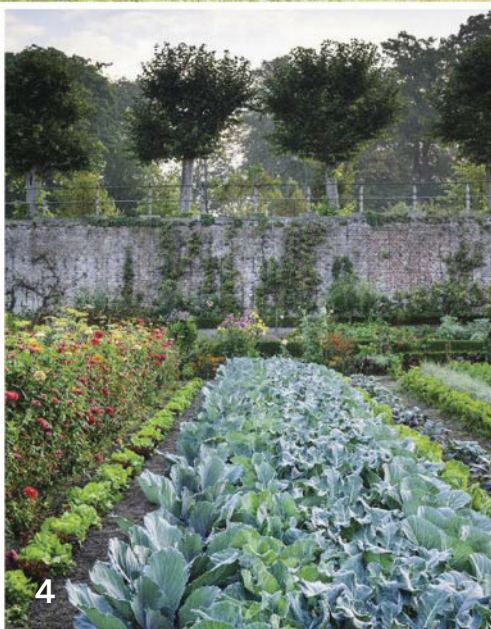
Those yellow wooden obelisks are quite a brave move but actually work well among a splendid cacophony of vegetables at Osterley Park. The gardens, including the walled potager, of this Georgian country estate on the outskirts of west London have been restored and loved by the National Trust since 1991.

3 Back to basics

This is not just any old small garden in Birmingham, this is the small garden in Birmingham owned and gardened by the divine Alys Fowler. Alys is a renowned gardener and writer who has squeezed very last square centimetre of growing space from her garden with a particular emphasis on things to eat.



3



4

4 Functional beauty

These are the kitchen gardens at Kasteel Hex in Belgium. The house was developed by François-Charles de Velbrück, the Prince-Bishop of Liège at the end of the 18th century (clerics lived rather well in those days). This is a serious vegetable garden but so beautifully kept and arranged that it becomes an honorary potager.

I have got myself into a bit of a pickle. “What would you like to write about this month?” say the nice people at *Gardens Illustrated*. “How about potagers?” say I breezily. So here I am, hoist by my own petard, finding myself in the position of having to come up with a neat answer to the obvious question: when does a vegetable garden become a potager? Some may say one is considerably more pretentious than the other and others maintain that the former is something that should only be permitted in France. However, I think that they have two distinct identities and anyway, we should try to be as one with the French. They may be surly on occasions but they have generously given us many good things.

I reckon – but please feel free to, politely, contradict me if you wish – a potager is an altogether more formal affair designed to be looked at as well as eaten, as opposed to a vegetable garden that is

there purely for food and, as a side effect, healthy labour. This implies that a veg garden cannot look amazing, which is not at all true, but it is a different kind of beauty. It is a beauty born of fecundity, and the promise of ratatouille and raspberries rather than design. I would hazard the theory that the difference is that most people’s vegetable gardens are planned while all potagers are designed. A subtle difference but a difference all the same.

Traditionally the potager is very formally laid out – this is a nod to medieval monks who liked a bit of religious imagery in their borders to divert their minds from caterpillars on their brassicas. However, the formality is by no means essential and there is nothing wrong with mixing things up a bit and scattering edibles through the borders. We have been doing it with herbs for centuries so why not fruit and vegetables as well? This works well in smaller ►

5 Colour blast

Philippa Burrough's garden at Ulting Wick in Essex is stuffed with enough irresistible flowers (particularly tulips and dahlias) to make any florist sick with longing. However, it does not stop there as there is also a potager with oaken-edged beds and squashes dangling from a willow tunnel. Opens for the NGS.

6 First love

This is where it all began for me, Barnsley House in Gloucestershire, once home of the great Rosemary Verey. It is now a very spiffy hotel but her memory lives on in the gardens, which are immaculately maintained. As well as the potager there are ponds and knot gardens and, apparently, a very fine afternoon tea.

7 Savoir flair

Restored in 1984 after the discovery of some dusty plans in the castle's archives, the gardens at Château Saint-Jean de Beaugregard near Paris is one of the rare castle gardens to have survived intact to the present day. Each of the garden's four quarters has been subdivided into 12 squares along with cut flowers and orchards.



5 MARIANNE MAJERUS GARDEN IMAGES ULTING WICK 6 JOHN GLOVER / GAP PHOTOS
7 GILLES LE SCANFF & JOÏLLE-CAROLINE MAYER / THE GARDEN COLLECTION / FP / BIOSPHOTO

▷ gardens where there may not be space to fence off a dedicated vegetable area. In one of my first gardens (indeed the first one that was not mostly concrete) we had courgettes among roses and just outside my office window right now we have pumpkins among rudbeckias. For even smaller gardens the same effect can be achieved with containers.

The first potager I ever encountered was in Rosemary Verey's garden at Barnsley House in Gloucestershire. I had seen it in books (along with the remarkable Laburnum Walk) and it was with great excitement (and some trepidation as Mrs Verey was, at that time, alive and rumbling around the garden) that we went to visit. They say that you should never meet your idols and in this case that was true as the garden was much smaller than I expected – I think one may have been inclined to say the same thing when

meeting, say, Napoleon. My second potager was a different kettle of fish: or might I say poisson as it was in France. Nobody will ever complain that Villandry is too small: there are nine squares stuffed with colour co-ordinated vegetables that are changed twice during the year to keep the visitor happy. This neatly avoids the dilemma facing every vegetable garden: the moment when they are looking their best is also the moment when we need to start eating their produce so they are soon reduced to a straggle of leftover foliage and expanses of bare soil. The balance between food and beauty is a difficult one to manage.

To get round this little dilemma, wise potager gardeners also plant up a selection of annuals and perennials among the vegetables. This wins on many levels – it extends the season, gives us flowers to cut to go with our vats of bean chutney and also



JASON INGRAM

8

8 Perfectly formed

As well as designing gardens across the world for all sorts of eminences, Arne Maynard still makes time for his own garden, Allt-y-Bela in the Usk Valley. As you would expect there is beautiful topiary and some fine borders but also this charming vegetable and cutting garden.

Further reading

If you are going to grow vegetables then, for goodness sake, grow the best you possibly can. These are useful guides to getting the most from your potager.

- **Abundance: How to Store and Preserve your Garden Produce** by Alys Fowler

(Kyle Books, 2016). Invaluable for learning how to make what you grow last.

- **The Great Vegetable Plot**

by Sarah Raven (BBC Books, 2005). A guide to creating a beautiful plot full of the best possible things to eat. Sarah's other great book, *The Cutting Garden*, will give you ideas of what to grow among the veg.

- **The New Kitchen Garden**

by Mark Diacono (Headline Home, 2015). Mark is the master of the unusual vegetable and the surprisingly good fruit. He can also cook.

brings us into the realms of companion planting. This is probably not the place to delve into this particular subject: but suffice to say that it is a way of creating happy plant communities where the flowers and vegetables band together to ward off various pests or attract pollinators.

So have we solved the problem? Have we come up with a decent explanation of the differences between veg gardens and potagers? I hope so. There will always be a slight division between gardeners who prefer vegetables and those who are ornamentalists. We have that in this house: my wife is very much in charge of vegetables, I do flowers. A potager garden is like the Korean de-militarised zone – a place where the two diametrically opposed parties can come together and work harmoniously. Actually that is nothing at all like Korea, but wouldn't it be nice if it were. □

Potagers to visit

Barnsley House

Barnsley, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 5EE.
Tel 01285 740000, barnsleyhouse.com/the-gardens/

Château de Saint-Jean de Beauregard

Rue du Château, 91940 Saint-Jean de Beauregard, France.
Tel +33 (0)1 60 12 00 01, domsaintjeanbeauregard.com

Château de Villandry

3 rue Principale, 37510 Villandry, France.
Tel + 33 (0)2 47 50 02 09, chateauvillandry.fr/en

Osterley Park

Jersey Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 4RB.
Tel 020 8232 5050, nationaltrust.org.uk/osterley-park-and-house



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The great debate

Garden designers Isabel and Julian Bannerman
share their ten favourite garden books

PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM

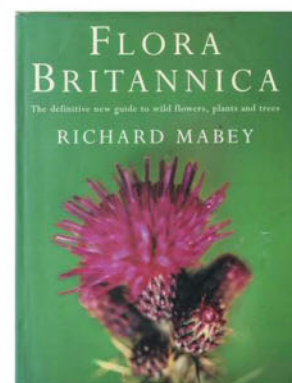




Something close to a riot broke out when Julian and I tried to agree which of the books strewn over the table would go into this article. Five years ago when we moved to our current house, the removal men paled – they had never known such a houseful of books. Teachers and vicars liked books, they said, but we were something else. At about the same time, our friend, the painter and writer Matthew Rice, said that he was sad to discover that two years after he moved he no longer missed the books he had yet to unpack, because everything is on the internet nowadays. After much heated debate, however, we all revised our view on the subject. The internet is a wonderful tool, and a huge boon to designers for reference and illustration, but there is nothing like browsing through all your old books and magazines for inducing a sort of meditative spirit of invention. Equally, the smell and

thrill of a new book can lure one into a state of immersion for an afternoon, all else blotted out. Like the written word, pictures and photography can be completely transporting, and many gardening books, while crammed with useful information, are also a visual trip, a fireside adventure into Monet's garden, 18th-century ironwork, or Japanese timber construction, bringing a kind of solace in their wisdom and beauty. Many of our books were presents, or remind us of a moment or a passion, perhaps picked up in the pannier market in Bideford. The two of us battled away over the relative merits of WJ Bean's precise botany, Roy Genders on cottage gardens, Hoskins on landscape and Oliver Rackham on trees. It was an invidious task, bringing out the vixen in both of us. But it was good to be reminded how many treasure troves there are out there, and all now so easy to find... on the internet.

Final contenders



Flora Britannica

by Richard Mabey
(Sinclair-Stevenson, 1996)

Extraordinarily erudite without being patronising, Richard Mabey is one of the greatest natural history writers alive today. This, perhaps his *magnum opus*, finds magic under every stone and in every crevice, dancing with blinding clarity between the practical applications of plants, and their witchcraft, medicine, and employment in the applied arts, encompassing their rarity and diversity, and observing with wry humour. Mabey is never boring; his mind is comprehensive and original, and this, like all his books, is one you can return to or read in a single sitting, absorbed by the astonishing fairytale take on the world around us.



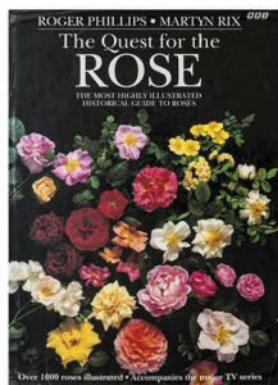
The Shell Gardens Book 1964

by Peter Hunt
(Phoenix House, 1964)

This book has been part of Julian's life ever since he can remember, igniting an early interest in gardens with its clear line drawings, engravings and photographs. Contributions by Barbara

*Phillips and Rix give
their quest for four
'stud' roses a touch of
Poirot and poetry*

Jones, Graham Stuart Thomas, Margery Fish and Christopher Lloyd among many others make it a treasury of garden history and plantsmanship. Small but chunky, it has everything in it – Painshill; William Beckford; vineyards; crinkle-crankle walls; hermits' cells; modern gardens; winter, wild and labour-saving gardens; historic and notable trees – all of the things we love in a compact, informative tome. A desert island introduction to gardens and gardening.



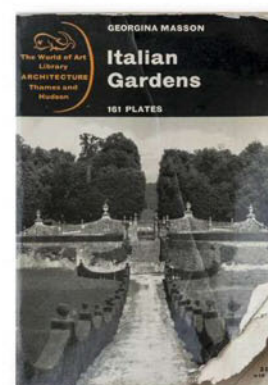
The Quest for the Rose

by Roger Phillips and Martyn Rix
(Random House, 1994)

So much do we love the series books by Phillips and Rix on all things botanical – annuals, shrubs, perennials and anything else you can think of – that we have almost all 19 of them and refer to them regularly. For their clarity and straightforward approach to the complex mysteries of botany, they are unparalleled.



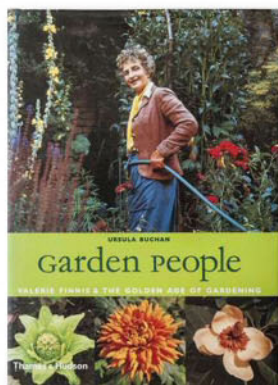
This record and history of over a thousand roses is the least fussy of the many gardening books we have gathered over the years. From myth, legend and fossilised plants, via Egypt, Greece and Italy, the authors take us on a quest along the silk road to China in search of four 'stud' roses – progenitors of modern tea roses and the wild parents of today's many cultivars. Roger Phillips trained as a painter at Chelsea School of Art and pioneered the use of colour photography as a reliable means of identifying plants, and this accounts for the masterful layout of the book. He and Martyn Rix, botanist, plant collector and gardener, gave their quest a touch of Poirot and poetry, but the case has never really been solved.



Italian Gardens

by Georgina Masson
(Thames & Hudson, 1961)

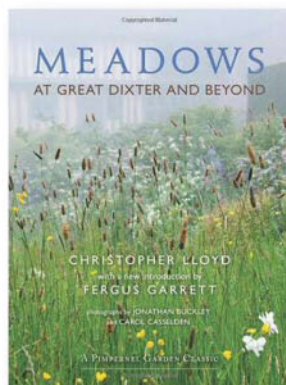
Following work in intelligence during the Second World War, Georgina Masson settled in Rome and became a self-taught architectural historian and photographer. She made her first camera with a quality lens fixed to a wooden box, graduating to a Rolleiflex and taking meditative black-and-white photographs of gardens and architecture. She wrote for the *Architectural Review* and *Country Life* from Rome for 30 years, only returning to England when her dog, the Abominable Willy, died, shortly before she did. This book, like all her writing, is informed, readable, romantic and irreverent, and has never been bettered. We took it on our first trip to Italy together in 1987, revelling in such pronouncements as 'anyone who wants to see Bomarzo 'aright' should visit it... either by pale moonlight or better still on one of those strange winter days when the whole valley is shrouded in mist'. ▷



**Garden People:
Valerie Finnis & The Golden
Age of Gardening**

by Ursula Buchan
(Thames & Hudson, 2007)

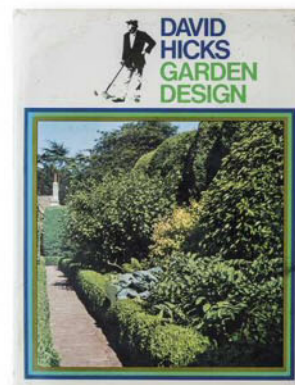
Valerie Finnis's photographs of remarkable people gardening in extraordinary clothes has a neutrality and honesty that is spell-binding. A cast of incredible growers of plants, true and passionate gardeners all, they are distracted in most of the pictures not by the photographer but by their obsession – plantspeople in their natural habitat before the world of Instagram or even the Sunday supplements. Another acute, Rolleiflex-wielding observer, Finnis was acknowledged as an expert in the alpine field, as well as one of the finest photographers of people and plants. She understood her subjects completely and why they felt so passionate about plants: 'For me it used to be plants before people, but it's really only the people that matter', she said. She even set up two trusts – the Merlin Trust and the Finnis Scott Foundation – to support aspiring gardeners. While Ursula Buchan pays tribute to the 'great chronicler of her age', her writing is easily equal to Valerie's photographs, sympathetically capturing the history and drama behind the images with a mischievous humour.



**Meadows: At Great Dixter
and Beyond**

by Christopher Lloyd, with a new
introduction by Fergus Garrett
(Pimpernel Press, 2016)

'Alive, teeming with life, mysterious and dynamic' is how gardener and writer, the late Christopher Lloyd described meadows. And he should know, having spent most of his long life creating the flowering tapestries in his garden at Great Dixter. This much-admired, instructive and celebratory account of meadows led the way for the revolutionary work of landscape designers Nigel Dunnett and James Hitchmough. Since then, we have all learned to value meadows infinitely more and treat them as important elements of gardening – anything to reduce the amount of pointless mowing we seem addicted to. Meadows are so mysterious that even the expertise of this master plantsman, exploring the management of meadow areas, explaining how to establish a meadow, describing grasses, bulbs and perennials and annuals that thrive in different meadow conditions and detailing how to grow them, leave one inspired but driven to ask yet more questions. These meadow diaries have become classics, crossing the line between gardening and natural history.



Garden Design

by David Hicks (Routledge, 1982)

David Hicks is an interesting example of an interior decorator who excelled in designing his own, and later others', gardens. Ahead of his time in many ways, he knew exactly what he liked and what he didn't like. He once returned a postcard we had sent him of the front of Wilton House in Salisbury. He had drawn all over it with straight red lines, complaining that it wasn't perpendicular. He liked modern design, informed with a classical understanding. He was adept at designing small gardens, and shows how to do this in the book, using crisp, bold drawings and extensive annotation. He was very clever at scaling down good design, particularly in a formal way – simplification and minimalism were his bywords. He relished clipped forms and was exacting in his use of geometry. As with his interiors, he understood how to use abstraction and blocks of colour outside, and the book is an object lesson in the importance of external form – of uncluttered, 'big' thinking. The book is illustrated mainly in black and white, with very cool, minimal layout for the 1980s, and has proved remarkably timeless, concentrating on design principles without the distraction of colour or flower. Its chic has not dated. ▷

*Christopher Lloyd's much-admired,
instructive and celebratory account
has led us all to value meadows
infinitely more*



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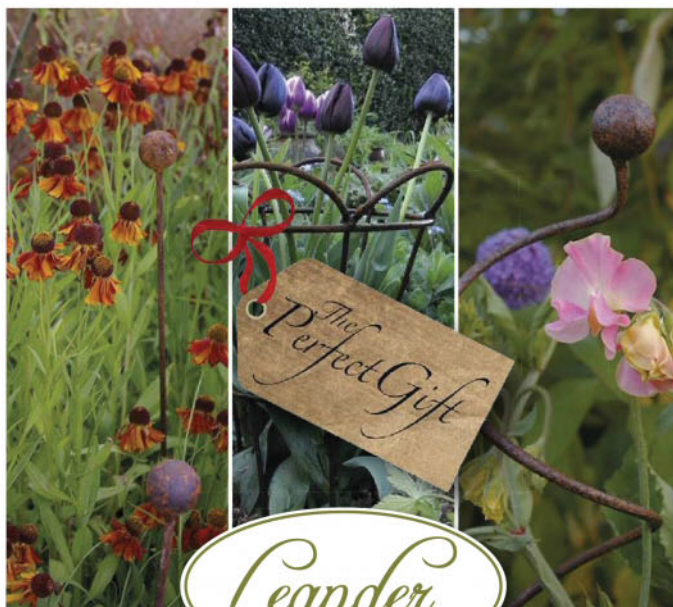
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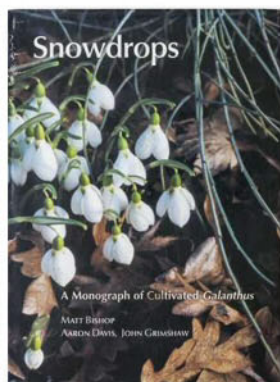


Candle Lanterns with a small tray inside for a tea light candle.



Wooden Keyrings : 70 locations

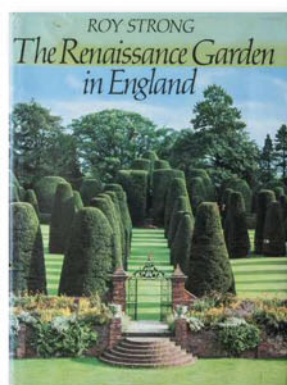
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Snowdrops : A Monograph of Cultivated Galanthus

by Matt Bishop, Aaron Davis
and John Grimshaw
(Griffin Press, 2006)

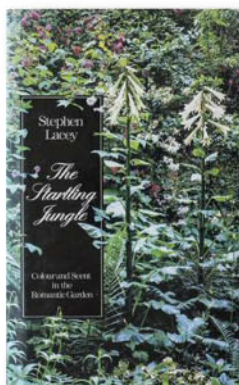
This definitive work of reference was a kind present from Sarah Raven. Julian, who is on his knees each February dividing his snowdrops, loves this book, dense in knowledge and illustration (ours is grubby and torn, greasily thumbbed). Much more than a dry monograph, the luminous photographs, sense of the quest, and hunt for other galanthophiles are all part of the fascination.



The Renaissance Garden in England

by Roy Strong
(Thames & Hudson, 1979)

Strong's ground-breaking masterpiece took apart stodgy, Edwardian received wisdom about Tudor and Stuart gardening and rebuilt it through exacting analysis, examining the influence of Renaissance thinking from Europe and bringing garden making into the realm of serious art history. This book is a revelation and a delight, peopled with scientists, poets and philosophers.



The Startling Jungle: Colour and Scent in the Romantic Garden

by Stephen Lacey
(David R Godine Publisher, 1990)

This book serves to synthesise much garden writing of the 20th century and its influence on gardeners. Romantic, domestic and knowledgeable, it is part of the great garden journalism tradition

Good garden writing needs to find a balance between effusion and dry fact

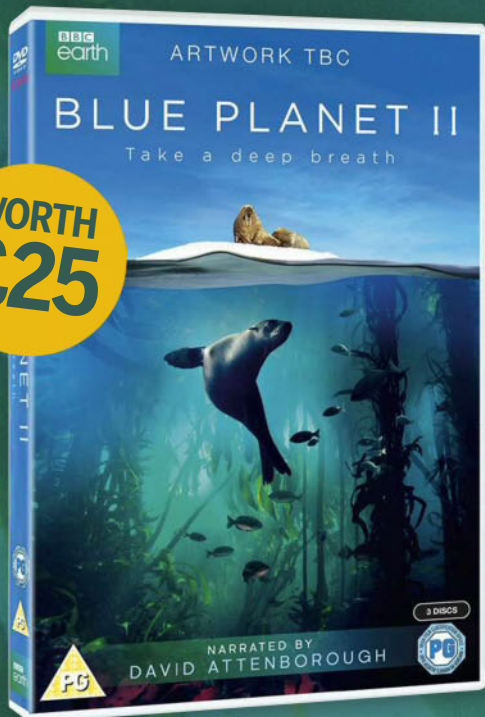
in this country (witness the offbeat, acerbic offerings of Canon Ellacombe in the Anglican journal, *The Guardian*, and, more recently, the singular poetry of Dan Pearson). Good garden writing needs to find a balance between mouth-watering effusion and dry fact, between intelligence and a lightness of touch. This book strikes just the right note, and is a good start for anyone wanting to read about the pleasure to be found in plants. □



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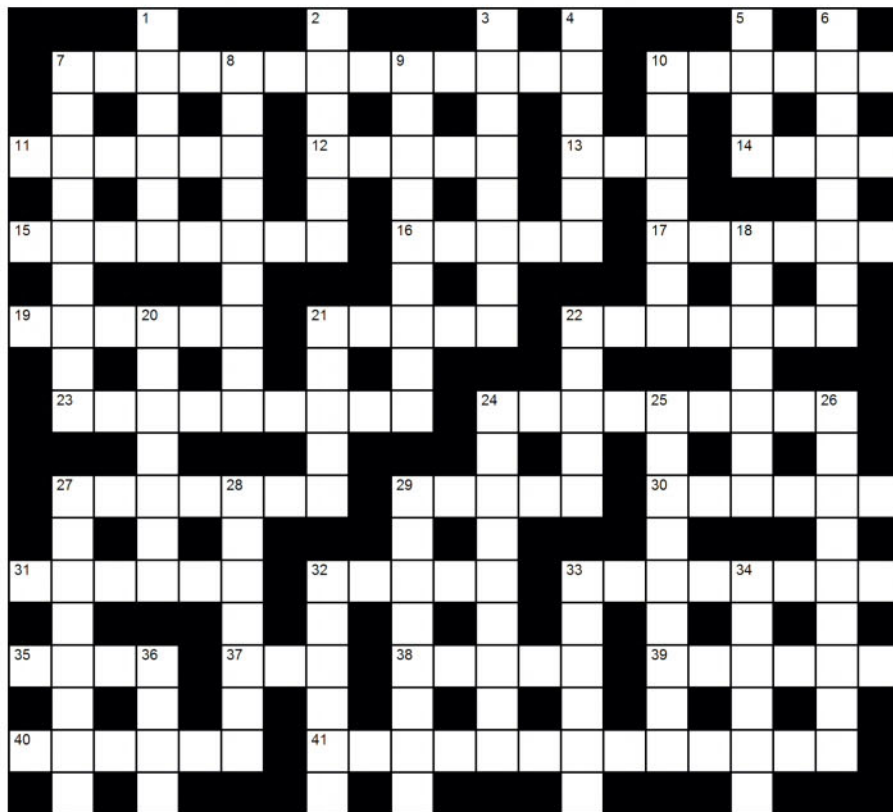
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Christmas crossword



ACROSS

- 7 *Ruscus aculeatus*, also called box holly – for a clean sweep in meat shop? (8,5)
 10 Purple-flowering perennial – in truth, a liability! (6)
 11 Leisurely walk – short way to remove lawn's bumps (6)
 12 Leguminous seed's beat (5)
 13 Is able to remove end of raspberry stem (3)
 14 A tall *Thalictrum* (meadow-rue) – part of carpel inserted (4)
 15 Flowers – and prospers (8)
 16 Genus of rocket salad provides a cure (5)
 17 Build-up of lawn's dead grass etc (6)
 19 Genus of labiate, often aromatic plants... in healthy muscari (6)
 21 Flogs slender shoots? (5)
 22 Wild garlic – moss ran wild (7)
 23 Ma labours moving the white mulberry genus (5,4)
 24 Clump-forming perennials of *Iris* family – sort of table iris? (9)
 27 Genus of Jerusalem sage (7)
 29 Virile male daylily with huge red/yellow flowers? (5)
 30 A miniature *Canna* cultivar – 'Fairy King'? (6)
 31 Dogwood genus (6)
 32 Garden pests fired from a gun? (5)
 33 Tree specialist (8)
 35 Soft central part of egg orange (4)
 37 Broadcast – it's essential to plant growth (3)
 38 Firm centre of egg cos lettuce (5)
 39 It's a dwarf *Paeonia* with red, single flowers, sonny boy! (6)
 40 Remove rudimentary flowers to encourage bigger blooms (6)
 41 Festival girl's *Helleborus niger* (9,4)

DOWN

- 1 Shrubs cut back to ground level – making simple seats (6)

- 2 Dreadful prices for dandelion-like flower called hawks-beard! (6)
 3 An eglantine's unopened flowers (8)
 4 Plant with pea-like flowers in autumn, partly biodynamic, I admit (6)
 5/22 Common name for *Trillium* plant – to rouse a cocky little bird? (4-5)
 6 Genus of shrub with large mallow-like flowers disturbed Isis chub (8)
 7 Holy Land town's form of *Eryngium* (sea holly) (9)
 8 Variety of oxeye, also called false sunflower – is sloe hip, perhaps (9)
 9 Sweet-scented orange tulip – 'Darcey Bussell'? (9)
 10 A robust *Euphorbia* – a minor character in *A Christmas Carol* (4,3)
 18 Monkshood or wolfsbane (7)
 20 Monroe's first tulip with white, splashed red flowers (7)
 21 Droops like a dehydrated flower (5)
 22 See 5 down
 24 Plant with fluffy foliage, *Stachys byzantina* (5,4)
 25 Plant's underground growth systems and surrounding soil (4,5)
 26 Northerners yearn for fir tree that doesn't shed its leaves? (5,4)
 27 Genus of 'Red Robin' shrub – possibly Ethiopian, not English (8)
 28 A condiment is made from its seeds – cut it and meet expectations (7)
 29 Plant also called Coral Bells – each hue changing, right inside (8)
 32 Trim Christmas fir from Norway (6)
 33 Season when *Clematis cirrhosa* 'Jingle Bells' starts flowering (6)
 34 Tabloid newspaper: "Peach with velvety red/yellow fruits" (3,3)
 36 Genus of evergreen shrubs with flower spikes... in the beehive! (4)

STOCKISTS Gifts for gardeners feature (pages 17-22)

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SOLUTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD WILL BE PRINTED IN THE NEXT ISSUE

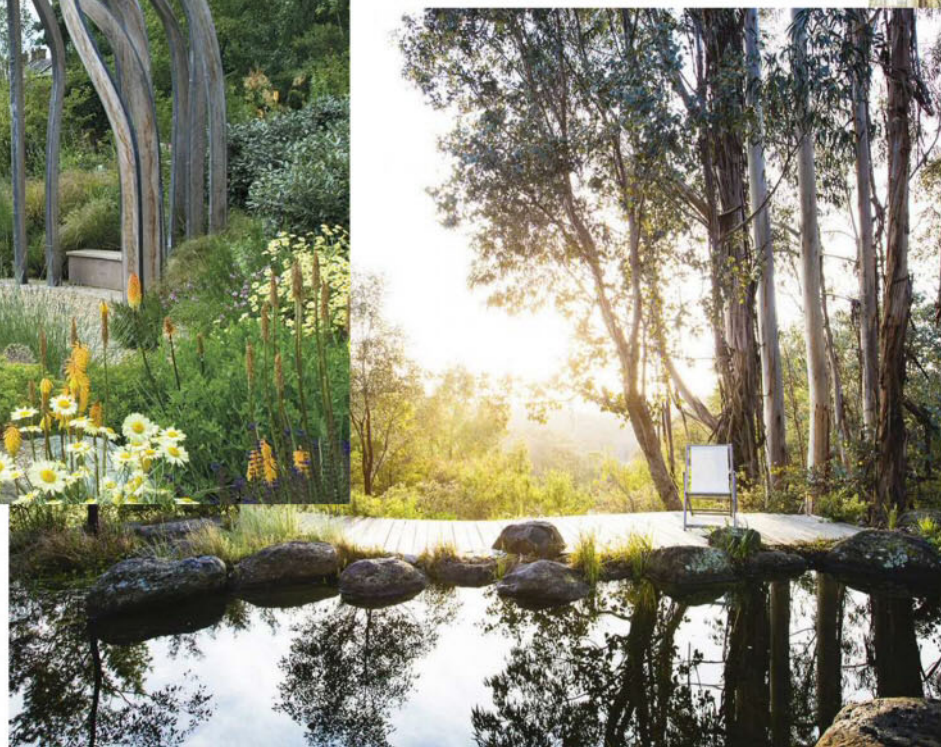
NOVEMBER'S SOLUTIONS

- ACROSS 1 Plum 4 Columnea 9 Ruby 10 Melon
 12/24 Umbrella plant 13 Atropa 15 Ananas 17 Dianella
 19 Crown rot 22 Cancan 23 Magpie 25 Agrostis 27 Anya
 29 Leeks 30 Dill 31 Dittany 32 Seed.
 DOWN 2 Layer 3 Mimulus 4 Collard 5 Lantana 6 Mower
 7 Ego 8 Pulmonaria 14 Pulsatilla 16/11 New wood 18 Eon
 20 Ruellia 21 Tracery 22 Cerasus 26 Sedge 28 Nod.



Left Andy Sturgeon's design for a garden in north Wales is punctuated by an oak and lead sculpture inspired by stamen.

Right Australian designer Sam Cox's gardens reveal as little human intervention as possible.



Australian Landscape Conference 23-27 March 2018

DESIGN WITH NATURE

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The Australian Landscape Conference takes place every two years and brings together an international panel of speakers to explore current trends and considerations in landscape design. For 2018, the conference looks at how our design template has become influenced by a more natural approach to planting.

The conference takes place at the same time as the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show, which will

feature Australia's best landscape and floral talent, and this can be visited in addition to conference activities, or as part of a conference group tour.

Conference activities

The landscape conference takes place on the Saturday, 25 March and Sunday, 26 March with talks from eight international speakers (see right). Additional, optional activities (at an extra cost) include a garden tour on 24 March, with visits to five notable gardens

in the Melbourne region, some of which are not normally open to the public. Then, there is the option to join a tour of the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show, before attending the Saturday evening Speakers' Dinner, with the chance to meet and chat with the international attendees.

Following the conference, there is a series of workshops run by 14 garden and design experts on the Monday and Tuesday, offering invaluable practical insights into a series of landscape topics.

INFORMATION landscapeconference.com
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Left Chicago's Lurie Garden, designed by Piet Oudolf, is an example of responsible horticulture within an urban setting.



Right The sweeping views of the Carmel Valley in California provide design focus for this garden by Bernard Trainor.

The international selection of speakers includes



Andy Sturgeon an award-winning British designer whose work fuses traditional, natural materials with contemporary design.



Kathryn Gustafson an American landscape architect renowned for creating distinctive and experimental sculptural landscapes.



Bernard Trainor an Australian-born designer whose work captures the wild soul of California where he runs a successful practice.



Miguel Urquijo a Spanish designer working in Spain's central plateau, whose designs consider people and the environment.



Prof Cassian Schmidt the director of Hermannshof in Germany, who remains at the forefront of experimental planting.



Noel Kingsbury a plantsman, prolific writer and lecturer based in the UK who promotes ecological planting design.



Dr Kate Cullity the Australian landscape architect described as a hybrid designer: part artist, part botanist, part architect.



Sam Cox an Australian designer known for his natural-style gardens that seamlessly transition into the wider environment.

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Christmas DAYS OUT

Get in the festive spirit with these fantastic seasonal excursions



1. BASILDON PARK

Why not come and create new traditions at Basildon Park this festive season? Bring the whole family for a frosty, refreshing walk through the impressive parkland, have a wander round the beautifully decorated house or grab a warming hot chocolate or cup of tea in the tea room.

basildonpark@nationaltrust.org.uk | 01491 672382



3. CHELSEA PHYSIC GARDEN

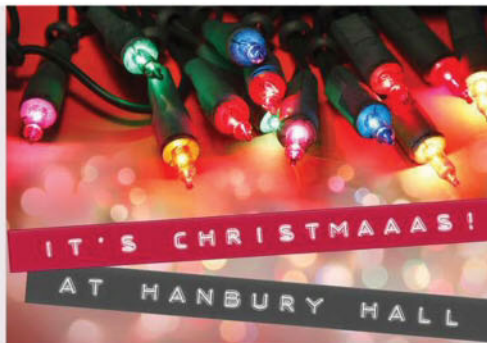
Join us at our Christmas Fair on Saturday 25 and Sunday 26 November. Discover the most extraordinary gift ideas from an unrivalled handpicked collection of suppliers and boutiques. There will be delicious food and drinks, handmade wreaths to buy, gifts galore and plenty of festive cheer with carols and Father Christmas. Tickets £6 online.

chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk | 020 7352 5646

2. HANBURY HALL

The Babycham is popping, the Slade hits are dropping! Explore the hall dressed for an imagined 1980s Christmas party: a riot of colour, with bright lights, tacky baubles and tinsel galore! 2-23 December National Trust, Hanbury Hall, Worcestershire WR9 7EA.

nationaltrust.org.uk/hanburyhall



5. PICTON CASTLE

Surrounded by a spectacular 40-acre RHS Partner Garden, Picton Castle originated in the 13th century, with a splendid Georgian wing added in the 1790s. A treasured family home for over 700 years, the elegant rooms feature opulent furnishings and fine works of art. Its annual Victorian Christmas Market takes place on 18 and 19 November this year.

pictoncastle.co.uk | 01443 775 1326



6. HADDON HALL

If you visit during our Christmas period this year, music will fill your ears, with different carols in each room Haddon Hall explores the meaning behind some of our favourite Christmas Carols. Come and see the Hall decorated for the festive season, with roaring fires, golden decorations and music filling the air.

Christmas Artisan Market: 17-19 November
haddonhall.co.uk | 01629 812855

4. GLAMIS CASTLE

This winter experience the magic of Christmas at Glamis Castle. See the classic Dickens' A Christmas Carol come to life, shop 'til you drop at our festive Christmas Market and be sure to meet Santa in his enchanting Grotto! Dates and times can be found on our website.

glamis-castle.co.uk | 01307 840393



Nursery Collection



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12

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4. WEASDALE NURSERIES LTD

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5. WOOTTENS OF WENHASTON

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6. SPRING REACH NURSERY

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9. DAISY CLOUGH NURSERIES

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11. TWELVE NUNNS

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12. BLUEBELL ARBORETUM & NURSERY

Specialists in hardy trees, shrubs and climbers including a huge selection of unusual species and cultivars. Informative website and a reliable mail-order service is available. bluebellnursery.com | 01530 413700

Winter Walks

This Winter, make time to visit this collection of stunning gardens and arboretums across the UK



1 HEVER CASTLE AND GARDENS WINTER WALKS

Wrap up warm and blow away the cobwebs, walk off the Christmas pudding and take a stroll in the gardens where the warm bark of the redwood trees glows against the winter sky. On the way up to the Castle the yew topiary stands majestically and the Winter Garden displays attractive and interesting colours and structures.

hevercastle.co.uk | 01732 865224



2 WOBURN ABBEY AND GARDENS

With 28 acres of gardens, set in an extensive deer park Woburn Abbey and Gardens is a fantastic location for a winter walk. Enjoy stunning views throughout the parkland and gardens and take in many features designed by the great landscape designer Humphry Repton. Open Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays throughout winter.

woburnabbey.co.uk | Woburn, Bedfordshire MK17 9WA



3 HAM HOUSE AND GARDEN

Discover the large collection of topiary and our clipped hedges this winter. Our Cherry Garden with domed lavender and santolina parterres is truly beautiful all year round. We have seasonal Kitchen Garden produce on the menu daily in our Orangery Cafe. Enjoy the garden with your four-legged friend from Boxing Day until 9 February.

nationaltrust.org.uk/hamhouse | Ham Street, Richmond TW10 7RS



4 OSTERLEY PARK AND HOUSE

Osterley Park and House is one of the last surviving country estates in London. The Winter Garden, now in its third year, showcases the best of the season with highlights of coloured bark and architectural seedheads. Open daily, 11am-dusk.

nationaltrust.org.uk/osterley | 020 8232 5050



5 BLUEBELL ARBORETUM AND NURSERY

Visit our tranquil, nine-acre woodland garden and nursery. Our collection of eye-catching birch gives an excellent display of coloured bark throughout the winter. Many of the rarities in the gardens are available for sale in our adjoining plant nursery. Mail-order service available.

bluebellnursery.com | 01530 413700

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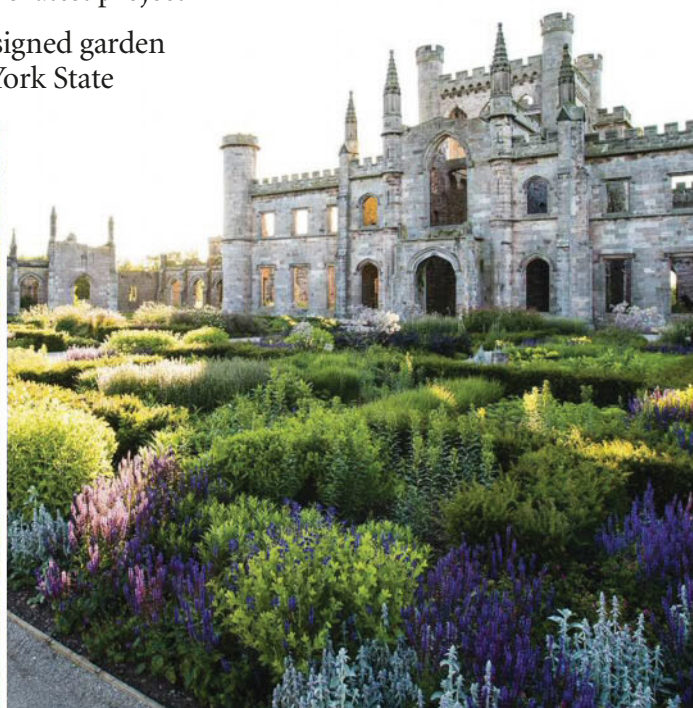


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Time to stand and stare

On winter walks Frank finds himself looking at ash trees with fresh eyes, now that time could be running out for these stately natives

WORDS FRANK RONAN ILLUSTRATION CELIA HART

The military grey of ash bark comes back into focus now the world is nearly monochrome again. The coal black buds already there, not as black as they will be in March, if we are to believe Tennyson, but black enough for admiration. Did the leaves fall, or were they pushed by the first swelling of their successors? A December morning, the sun bright enough to dazzle but not strong enough to dry the shine off the branches, is not a bad time to take a look, while bareness is a novelty still.

While we still have ashes to look at, of course. We don't yet know if they'll go the way of the elm, and the threat of their extinction is distilling our appreciation. I remember the elms coming down in my childhood and don't think I'm imagining the atmosphere of grief for those shambling giants. Ashes now are still in every view and perhaps taken for granted, so maybe it is worth looking at one as though for the first time. In leaf they are surprisingly exotic, giving a feathery lightness to the landscape, leavening the weight of oaks. In bareness they have a lithe vitality, a sinuous way of drawing with their branches against the sky.

Just beyond the northern hedge an ash and oak stand together, like one of those couples who seem to have nothing in common, yet belong intertwined. Ash seedlings are the bane of the hedge, and yet it is that ash which I watch most anxiously for signs of sickness, realising now that I have never had a temperate garden without a prospect of ash somewhere.

In France the ash at the very bottom of the garden, feet sipping into a deep pool that fed a weir, was ancient and hollow, smooth only on the sparse coronet of new branches that trickled from a knotty pate. For centuries it had been pollarded and now, in



*In bareness ashes have a lithe vitality,
a sinuous way of drawing with their
branches against the sky*

exhausted retirement, seemed to be keeping to the discipline of youth, despite being nothing more than a few shards of petrified bark in a semi-circle.

In the garden in Ireland, where I first put a trowel in the earth as a child, the ash was a young thing, but strong enough, barely, for the swing and the climbing rope, and the abuse of children with penknives who wanted to carve initials and harvest forked branchlets for catapults. The house belongs to an uncle now and I still see that tree from time to time, astonished by how small it seems. Did we stunt it with our clambering and flaying?

In another, later, Irish garden the best ash was in a hedge, and the main trunk had died or been killed and looked like a dragon rearing

out of a thicket of stems that may or may not have been its own. Just as the only place you'll see an elm these days is hiding in a hedgerow, that may well be all we have of ashes in the future. Except that people keep saying hopeful things: that some strains may be resistant. Perhaps there will be judicious sacrifices made to save important populations. Our kitchen counter is made from an elm that was axed to save the elms of Brighton.

For now it is unbearable: it has come to the stage when you walk with friends in their gardens and they nod at some great ash of theirs and say that they think it has got the dieback and you all look away and nothing is said for two or three minutes. I think about the huge ashes above the nursery at Great Dixter and know that I should enquire about them, but haven't (someone will tell me now, I suppose). And go beyond the northern hedge, on to the common, and pretend that I am only admiring the fine beauty of ash branches in winter, but really am checking to see that this one ash is healthy still and the oak won't be a widow yet. □



Frank Ronan is a novelist who lives and gardens in Worcestershire.

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